Macapagal pushing hard for national ID system

Story on Page A2

e-mail: feedback@inq7.inter.com.ph

Christmas goes to the dogs, cats, and other pets

WASHINGTON—From edible greeting cards to rubber chew toys in the shape of George W. Bush, American pet owners have lots to choose from when shopping for holiday gifts for their animal friends.

Domestic pets slightly outnumber human beings in the United States, with 350 million pets to 280 million people, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers' Association (APPMA).

Pets can be found in 62 percent of American households, with cats the most popular (77.7 million), followed by dogs (65 million), small animals, birds, reptiles and fish, the trade group said.

And Americans' love for their furry, feathered and finned friends led $34 billion in sales in 2002—up $00 million from last year—according to APPMA, which groups more than 500 pet product manufacturers and importers.

The pet product industry has outpaced the candy industry, with $30 billion in sales, and the human toy industry at $20.3 billion, the group said.

Food purchases top the list of pet budget

CONTINUED ON

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INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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WHAT'S INSIDE

■ To a boxer dying
SUNDAY INQUIRER MAGAZINE
■ Top 10 reasons FPJ is running
LIFESTYLE, J1

w-MAGIC www.inq7.net

ROCO: Free education elementary and high school for all, an agenda of HOPE.

LACSON: Justice, law and order in first 100 days of the presidency.

SOTTO: Sandiganbayan Fortunato Pos Jr., who is due to hit the ring, not stage fight.

Full Coverage Starts Inside

Economy takes backseat

Negros twins, still joined, back to old playful selves

BACOLOD—A set of playful 19-month-old conjoined twins from the Philippines were released from hospital on Friday after completing the second in a series of operations to separate them.

Carl and Clarence Aguilte, who are joined at the top of their heads, left the children's hospital at Mandaue Medical Center four days after the most recent procedure that doctors hope will eventually lead to a full separation.

"The boys are wide awake and back to their old playful selves, keeping their mother, Arlene, busy as their bedside trying to keep them from crawling out," said Dr. David Stadtlaender, chief of pediatric plastic surgery at the children's hospital and one of the lead surgeons. "More important than anything else is that there are no signs of neurological problems."

The twins are headed back to Blythedale Children's Hospital in Valhalla, New York, where they will undergo nutritional and physical therapy until they return to Manaleare for the third and possibly last separation procedure sometime in early February, Stadtlaender said.

MANAGE M

Roco, Lacson bare platforms; FPJ a no-show

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FACED with a resurgence in kidnappings and bank robberies coupled with the growing drug menace, the country's top businessmen had to let economic issues take a backseat in this year's biggest gathering of the captains of industry to seek solutions to these problems which have driven investors away and hobbled the economy.

In the past, businessmen traditionally expected the President to make policy statements on economic issues when addressing their annual business confab.

But at this year's 29th Philippine Business Conference which ended yesterday, businessmen were more concerned with the worsening peace and order situation and rampant corruption in government and how the government or the incoming administration would address these critical issues.

"Everybody agrees that unless you address the fundamental issues of peace and order and corruption, the economic programs will not fly," Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president Peter Serfin said.

Employers Confederation of the Philippines president Donald Dee said the elections would be won and lost on the basis of how voters perceive the candidates' plans to restore peace and order and eradicate corruption.

"These are the issues that touch the Filipinos more personally than the economy because they are affected by the rising criminality and corruption is a setback in the face of Filipinos because foreigners would think we have no stability," Dee said.

Addressing the business gathering on Friday, President Macapagal-Arroyo declared a big chunk of her speech to her plans to stem the alarming rise in kidnappings and bank robberies, particularly in the metropolis.

Aside from Ms. Macapagal, the PCCI, the confab's organizer, had also invited other presidential aspirants to present their respective platforms of government to the businessmen.

PCCI president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said the business community hoped that

ECONOMY P2

A TEACHER'S TRIUMPH

'I dreamt of stars; I got a planet'

The following are excerpts from a speech delivered by the author, a multi-awarded teacher from Cebu, last Oct. 24 during the Best Practices Fair co-sponsored by the San Miguel Corp. at the Cebu Shangri-La hotel. ED.

By Jeanette T. Biyo

I AM here to tell about "The Power of the Human Spirit." Indeed, the human spirit has no limits. If you dream big, and you have the determination and the will to pursue your dream, it will become a reality.

I dreamt of reading stars; I was given a planet.

A few months ago, I was featured in local, national and international news papers. I created a stir as the first Asian teacher to win the Intel Excellence in Teaching Award in an international competition held last year in the United States.

But I think what created waves was the fact that I am a Filipina, and I defeated 4,000 other teachers from around the world, including the American finalists in their hometowns. Because of this, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Laboratory in Boston named a minor planet in my honor.

There is now a Planet Biyo, located between Mars and Jupiter, rotating around the sun.

What made me stand out among the best teachers in the world? My zeal to attaining this international recognition was a very long 23 years of improving and harnessing my craft.

I consistently studied and learned new skills to improve my method of teaching. I wanted my methods to be interesting, relevant and fun for students. For as in any product, the measure of teaching success is client satisfaction.

I acquired a degree in biology from the

CONTINUED

BRAVO: Power of the human spirit

ROBOMEDS. Coach Gilbert Z. arranges toy figures with Pasmak quites, Eye Peña and Kyle Mika to help her with their Lego robots.

Back Section

3 Pinoy kids have fun with robots, win a medal

By Yuk Cuerveo

FROM three Baltasone boys comes yet more proof that Filipinos are not far behind when it comes to high-tech wizardry.

A trio of Grade 6 students from La Salle Greenhills pulled off a surprise by bagging the bronze medal in a recent international robotics contest. They also won many hearts for keeping their calm while their foreign opponents lost their cool in the heat of competition.

Ribelbert Kyle Mina, Paolo Adriel Aquino and Emmanuel Johann Peña II were only beaten by two Chinese teams in one of the events during the 5th International Robot Olympiad held in Daejon, South Korea.

The meet for elementary and high school students ran from Nov. 6 to 9 and saw competition from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Russia and South Korea.

Dispelling the notion that robotics is an intimidating science for Filipino students, Kyle, Paolo and Emmanuel in the line tracing event, a contest that rated how fast and accurate a wheeled machine—assembled and programmed on the spot—could complete an obstacle course.

The object was for the robot-sensitive robot to follow a black line and negotiate the turns, twists and loops on a flat course about the size of a ping pong table.

Each team was given a standard Lego robotics kit of spare parts, motors, wheels and sensors. The contest set limits on a robot's size, but practically allowed any design and program. The one

3 PINOYS P2

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WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Second FRONTPAGE
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2003

GMA hell-bent on national ID

By Juliet Javellana and TJ Burgonio

FILIPINOS have accepted willingly several identification card systems, why should the proposed national ID system be any different?

President Macapagal-Arroyo is bent on pushing for a single national ID system for all citizens despite legal obstacles and objections from human rights groups.

Mr Macapagal noted that various ID systems were already being widely used, including the Social Security System ID, driver's license, organization cards like the Rotary Club, and ID cards issued by private corporations and credit card companies.

"Our people have accepted all these inconveniences of political and economic facilitation. I don't see how a national ID system can be portrayed as so oppressive an instrument," the President said during a speech before the Lasallian Island Conference of the Presidential Board Members League.

"We are simply trying to consolidate what has been done for decades in a single verifiable unified system in order to deter criminals and terrorists and deprive them of anonymity among our law-abiding citizens," she said.

She vowed to pursue this program "for a safer and more prosperous tomorrow."

The President will not even wait for Congress to legislate the system. She urged the provincial board members, who are the legislators in their respective provinces, to pass local ordinances for local ID systems.

She said some local government units had already put this system in place in their communities.

"You can have a provincial resolution that will provide for a provincial ID. Let's show these criminals that the law never sleeps and they won't escape from it," she said.

The President stressed the long pending proposal for a national ID as a "solution measure" necessary to combat criminality and terrorism.

Her anti-kidnapping czar, Angelo Reyes, said he would lobby Congress to pass a bill setting up a national ID system.

"We believe that such a system will deter crimes and facilitate a lot of other things," said Reyes, chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force.

Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr said a national ID system would facilitate the transactions of business.

"In Pilipinas, we should think positively. When we transact business in any office, we need an ID. You can't rely on cedula (residence certificate). You can buy 100 cedulas. We need an ID that can identify you differently from other Filipino citizens," Ebdane said.

REAL LIFE
Terrorism, abduction, the killing zone...all these take a backseat to a mother's concern of catching enough fish to feed her two children and perhaps sell at the market in Barangay Bangar, Marungas Island, near Jolo, Sulu.

2 presidential candidates present platforms

Roco: Agenda of HOPE

By Ma. Cecilia P. Ocjo

FORMER senator and now presidential contender Raul Roco yesterday presented through his Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAMBA) his platform of governance in the annual gathering of captains of business and industry.

Pointing both hands with two middle fingers folded down to form the letter H, Roco explained that he is running for president to save year's elections on the "Agenda of HOPE."

HOPE, Roco told the businessmen, stands for "Honest government, Opportunity for all, and special privileges for none; Peace, productivity and prosperity; and Education and environment for sustainable development," Ilocanoborn The Filipino is good.

Addressing the 26th Philippine Business Conference held at the Diosa Penthouse of the Manila Hotel, Roco stressed that the new presidency of the republic should be prayerful, sincere and genuine.

A former corporate lawyer with a master's degree in comparative law from Yale, Roco served as a congressman, a senator and education secretary. He was named one of the Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines in 1964 and was also a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention. He ran for president in the 1998 elections.

Roco's "Agenda of HOPE" tackles education, health, the economy, local governance, the rule of law, the environment, foreign affairs and peace.

Calling businessmen "stewards," Roco urged his audience to participate in poverty alleviation and economic growth. "We will never eradicate poverty if we do not share."

The role of the government, Roco said, was to empower and remove obstacles in order for business to thrive. Citing Hanoi's case, Roco said corporate governance must also be transparent and businessmen must make "profit with honor."

The salient points of Roco's "Agenda of Hope" include:

- Increase the tax effort ratio to 20 percent of gross domestic product.
- Provide access to credit and capital formation for self employment.
- Upgrade capacity of local government to provide agriculture support services.
- Upgrade farmer access to technology, venture capital and liberalized credit.
- Major improvements in infrastructure, low-priced transport, water and sanitation and power.
- Organize a Presidential Commission for the Management of Global Migration.

Ping: Justice, law, order

By Michael Lim Ubac

PROJECTING himself as the solution to the alarming rash of kidnappings, robberies and worsening lawlessness in the country, opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday vowed, if elected president, to eliminate organized crimes and restore "justice, law and order" in the first 100 days of his presidency.

"We will target 100 heinous criminals, syndicates and bring these criminals to justice," Lacson told an annual gathering of businessmen." Without justice, law and order the most brilliant economic plans will get us nowhere," he added.

Lacson said that in 90 days, his administration, particularly the law enforcement agencies, would undertake significant and massive reforms to "transform themselves into efficient, competitive and professional organizations worthy of the respect of the public. Rogue cops will be dismissed and charged before the courts of justice."

The tough-talking Senator, a former police official, Lacson disclosed his vision of governance and political platform—restore justice, law and order; stop corruption through leadership by example; increase national wealth; upgrade education; institute investor-friendly and predictable economic policies; strengthen the judicial system; and a national health policy to make quality health affordable.

In his speech at the 26th Philippine Business Conference at the Manila Hotel, the former top cop also promised to reinvent the presidency.

"We will use the power of the presidency to deliver, with a sense of urgency, measurable reforms that have always been promised but never delivered," said Lacson, referring specifically to the 1,000 top businessmen attending the confab.

Short of promising an era of peace and tranquility, Lacson vowed to "save the country" by hammering the entire bureaucracy in a massive campaign to oppose drug lords and their syndicates, hitmen-for-hire groups and other organized crimes.

To deter crimes, Lacson pledged to lift the moratorium on the enforcement of the death penalty for those convicted of heinous crimes such as kidnapping and drug trafficking.

When asked during an open forum by a Chinese businessman if Lacson would execute a death convict during his One of Six presidency, he replied, "But Hey One... Ina Wush One," to the delight of the enthusiastic crowd.

He said the anti-crime drive should be "noticeable in 100 days so that you can tell your children once again, "If it's late at night and you want to wander, look for a policeman for help."

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Gloria warns speculators

By Juliet Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday warned speculators against putting pressure on the Philippine peso, stressing that the government has the tools to defend the unit.

"I must warn speculators not to test the government's policy determination," the President said during a speech before the Lasallian Island Conference of the Presidential Board Members League.

She gave unending orders to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to reign in the peso which fell to a record low of 55.85 to the dollar on Thursday. The local currency recovered slightly to about 55.75 to the dollar in late trading on Friday.

"The Bangko Sentral has the tools to maintain the stability of the exchange rate and we are confident in the BSP's capacity to use these tools skillfully and competently as in the past," Mr Macapagal said.

"In the meantime, it would help if people can shake off the election fever and get on with more productive endeavors," she said.

She urged all sectors of society to team up behind political and economic stability and make a strong collective pitch on law and order and development.

The peso fell to record lows after Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho announced his resignation two weeks ago and other movers and shakers like Jaime Fernandez Pobre Jr. announced on Wednesday that he would run for president to test Mrs Arroyo's presidential election.

She, who is closely identified with ousted President Joseph Estrada, is a high school dropout with no government experience. His popularity with the masses has raised fears in the business community that he might become the country's next leader. With a report from AFP

Lacson willing to talk turkey

SEN. Panfilo Lacson yesterday reiterated that he was willing to meet with Pentagon Pen Jr. on Nov. 3 to iron out their differences.

"The other night, our leaders agreed to attune the tone of us to first settle the [issues of the opposition's standard-bearer] by ourselves," Lacson said in a press conference yesterday at the Manila Hotel. He said he was quite open to the idea, but "doesn't see round yet [that] 101."

Lacson's handlers told the reporters that the fallout of Senate-backing Filipino faction led by Senators Edgardo Angara and Vicente Sotto II, who are both backing Pen, were untenable to the proposed meeting between the two presidential contenders.

"Game na game na akong makipag-usap [I'm more than willing to talk with him]," said Lacson. "I sure do this issue resolved. To me, it is important that the opposition have one [presidential] candidate."

But Lacson, an LDP member, stressed that he would never agree to be Pen's running mate.

"I've replied to that question over and over again," he said. "I'm not chilling down in the vice-presidential position."

Lacson said that should the LDP select Pen, "I'd rather go back to a senator to finish my term up to 2007...and that's it."

But Lacson is convinced that Pen and company at the LDP should abide by the decision of the united opposition should he be chosen standard-bearer.

"They better agree," the senator said. "That is the essence of democracy. When the majority rules, the minority follows."

Lacson refused to put meaning to Pen's absence at yesterday's forum of presidential aspirants sponsored by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Let's give him the benefit of the doubt," he said, adding that Pen probably lacked time to prepare for the forum. Michael Lim Ubac

HK training RP graft-busters

By Armando N. Nocum

LOCAL graft fighters are learning from the master themselves—even Hong Kong's mainmen—how the revered anti-graft warriors who rid Hong Kong of corruption in the 1970s.

A member of the Philippines' Lifestyle Check Coalition has revealed that the government has started sending prosecutors and graft investigators to Hong Kong to train with its Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

Among those who recently returned to the country after six weeks of training with the ICAC was assistant Secretary Nick Lizada, head of the Presidency Group under the office of presidential chief of staff Rigoberto Tiglao.

"We are going to send many more people—from the Ombudsman and the Commission on Audit—to get training from those who have already proven their skills in fighting graft," said Dennis Rollanes of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission and a founding member of the Lifestyle Check Coalition.

"The fight against graft could really take off with these initiatives in place," she said.

The ICAC has certainly fought graft in Hong Kong by having undercover agents work in the offices of suspect officials and having them mingle with the officials' associates in order to learn about their illegal activities.

The agency was able to uncover scores of graft cases this way and to arrest a number of big-time grafters, including then ICAC operations head Rosa Kwok Mow-ann, who has since retired.

In a recent interview, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo said the government intends to tap the services of Kwok in training local graft investigators.

Marcelo has asked Malacañang to create an investigation bureau under his office. He said the bureau—which initially would have 50 graft busters—will be patterned after the ICAC.

"They (Hong Kong) were very successful because they have a core of 500 field investigators," he said.

So far, the Philippine government's clamor to crack down on graft has resulted in the filing of graft charges against two ranking officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways, three officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and four from the Bureau of Customs.

In a press statement Friday, Marcelo said that when he assumed office last year, the Ombudsman's investigators were down to only around 100 personnel due to the "severe lack of prosecutors and field investigators."

In other statements, Marcelo said he has 12 full-time investigators handling some 2,000 cases before the Sandiganbayan.

"HEY, JUST DOING MY JOB!"
Two unidentified members of the Presidential Security Group (left and the bracketed) angrily confront photographer Val Henderson from a group of foreign photographers at Presidential Heliport during Arroyo's Dec. 2 trip. Moments later, the PSG agent at left pushed Henderson from the back. Manila Standard photographer Ry Acosta, who took the photo, was himself allowed earlier by Major Rodel of the PSG. Foreigners covering the President have long been complaining of harsh treatment by the PSG.

TREE PLANTING
President Macapagal-Arroyo receives a miniature macopa tree from children of officials of Plantation Hills, Tagaytay Highlands. The President led a tree-planting ceremony at the Tagaytay golf club. Looking on is Tagaytay City Mayor Francis Tolentino.

Christmas goes . . .

or $15 billion annually—for medication and palpitations in excess of $7.6 billion.

Toothman Centers, which surveyed 6,000 pet owners, found that 90 percent of them plan to purchase their pet a Christmas gift this year.

Nine out of 10 Americans said they would spend up to $50 on pet gifts, while the other 10 percent said they would spend more.

And pet psychic Marcella Moore says she's offering a range of services—new-owner readings and surprise sitting for the family pet.

Well-heeled pet owners may opt for the Gucci pink hair dog bed for $2,050.

Political toys are bound to be in demand this year as the United States heads into the November 2006 elections.

For $1.2 the dog-roaring Democrat can let his owner rinse his lungs into a rubber chew toy in the shape of President George W. Bush.

19 assessment high, that spends horribly when opposed or bitten.

Republicans can buy the equivalent of Senator and former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, but Osama bin Laden chew toy is also available.

Another curiosity comes from Japan—a dog collar equipped with software that translates barks into human language on a hand-held computer....all for $300.

Other marketers are appealing to single-living, health-conscious consumers.

With status eating society $300 billion a year, Bruce Tan Boon of the website WeGo.ca.com has published a series of books, priced at $9.8 to $15 each, about letting pets benefit from the quest for inner peace.

He says he himself places fat hands on his diminutive Goodboy and his—or Sandhya-Sing-he yoga session, so that they can reap the benefits of tva meditation practice. AFP

VICOR AWARDS: Conjoined Filipino twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre.

Negros twins, still joined. . .

The hospital had said previously that the third procedure would take place in January. The twins underwent their first major operation on Oct. 28.

The Twins were born in Silay City in Negros Occidental. Their mother, Arlene, had to quit her job as a nurse to take care of them after they were born. Her mother, an accountant, also had to quit her job to help Arlene with the twins.

Through the Philippine Airlines Foundation, the twins were flown to New York City. The operation, being performed by a team of 30 surgeons and other doctors, was made possible by several sponsors through the US-based non-profit organization Children's Hearts.

In a 5 1/2-hour operation on Monday, surgeons cut and divided some of the major blood vessels shared by the boys and grossly patched spare flesh broken, which were absorbing but not intermixed, said Dr. James Goodrich, member of the boys' head surgeons.

Surgeons also repeated one procedure from the first operation—inserting a pouch called a tissue expander beneath the scalp of one of the boys. The two expanders that were implanted in October had to be removed when infections developed.

The expanders, which are to be inflated with a saline solution over several weeks, are designed to help the twins grow enough skin to cover their heads when they are separated.

Earlier this week, Goodrich said the overall effort to separate the twins was now at least 50 percent complete and that complete separation would be accomplished in the third or possibly fourth operation.

The team decided on a gradual approach rather than a single marathon operation to separate the twins in an effort to reduce blood loss and help the boys adapt to each stage of the surgery. Goodrich said two or three operations to reconstruct the boys' skulls would follow the separation. AP

Look to New Zealand as trade partner, envoy tells Pinoys

By Dennis C. Santos
INQ Mindanao Bureau

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—There is room for Philippine exports in "Middle Earth."

New Zealand, more popularly known today as the country where the movie trilogy "Lord of the Rings" was filmed, has a steadily growing consumer market which Filipino entrepreneurs should consider exploring.

"I keep on emphasizing that the New Zealand market is open. Give us a product with a good price and quality and we will certainly buy it," New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines Terry Baker told the Inquirer here on Thursday.

He said that despite the increased opportunity to penetrate his country's markets, Filipino businessmen, the other segments, preferred to trade with Asia, the US and Europe because "we are seen as a small and remote country."

Baker is hoping popular because of "Lord of the Rings," New Zealand was known as a country with millions of sheep and cattle that are monitored in human inhabitants.

But Baker said the New Zealand consumer market has been growing steadily.

"We have a sizeable consumer market, we deem it a potential for the Philippines to sell more there," Baker said.

And unlike the United States and the European Union, New Zealand imposes fewer trade barriers.

Baker said that with the recent adoption of the WTO rules by Cancún, Mexico, New Zealand sees more opportunity to trade with developing countries like the Philippines.

"It's to New Zealand's interests to trade with developing countries," Baker said.

Gov't sets aside P370M for info on crime gangs

THE GOVERNMENT has allotted P370 million to reward money for informants that would lead to the arrest of illegal drug and kidnap-for-ransom syndicates.

"We are determined to make our the operations of these criminal syndicates and crack all at once pay and support the government's war against them," President Macapagal-Arroyo said in a brief message during the first Iloilo inauguration of former Bukidnon Rep. Ricardo Silverio in San Isidro, Bulacan, yesterday afternoon.

Mr Macapagal said the reward money hopes to encourage citizens to participate in stopping kidnapping incidents and the illegal drug trade.

Silverio's supporters, many of whom were clown saying "We Love YOU Dick," welcomed the President of the former congressman's restriction.

On Monday, Mr Macapagal will launch "The Nation's Damage against Drugs Saving This Generation Campaign" anti-illegal drugs program at the Greenhills Bowlodrome in Manila. He will be joined by representatives from the youth, sports and religious sectors as well as civil society. There will be simultaneous launching ceremonies at the City Park in Davao City, Freedom Park in Cebu and Rizal Park in Baguio City at 4:30 p.m.

The Malacañang launch will be graced by boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, billiards legend Efren "Bata" Reyes, Philippine Basketball Association cagers and other sports personalities who will lead the youth to join drug-free sports.

Singers and actors show biz personalities have also been invited to join the President at the launch.

Under the song serves goals if Mangilit Law enforcement agencies will sign a committee of concurrence with the different sectors to come up with alternative projects for the youth in sports, the arts, environment and other volunteer work to save them away from drug use. With a report from Gerardo Reyes, *INQ Central Luzon Desk*

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Alumni are enjoined to contact the following:
Faculty of Arts and Letters / Liberal Arts c/o Ms. Janet Decasito / Ms. Lolly Cabral and Prof. Lino Bansil – Tel. Nos. 731-4083 / 731-3151 ext. 8228
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Gloria is our bet, say NPC lawmakers

By Cynthia D. Balana

SEVERAL congressmen belonging to the Lakas-National People's Coalition headed by businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco have declared their support for President Macapagal-Arroyo in next year's presidential election.

Sources from the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats said the representatives' decision was reached yesterday in a meeting of some NPC congressmen and the party's special coalition partner, the United Nogrot Alliance (UNA) in Tuling Negros Occidental. Mayors, vice mayors and councilmen of the province's cities had been attended the meeting.

Despite FPJ

This despite movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s announcement on Wednesday that he is running for the presidency. Cojuangco is presumed to be backing Poe's candidacy.

The congressmen at yesterday's gathering were identified as Jose Pablo (Happy) Rendon of Pangasinan, Eduardo Veloso of Leyte, Silvestrino Libarios of Eastern Samar, Felipe Rodriguez of Lanao del Norte, Rodolfo Bacilonga of Tandayapan del Norte, Jesus Palicio of Surigao del Sur, Douglas Cagas of Davao del Sur, Tomas Dumpit of La Union, Alfredo Maranon of Negros Occidental, Gilmer Tolentino of Central Pangasinan, Eduardo Ermita of Eastern Pangasinan, Amado Espino of Western Pangasinan and Gerry Ejercito of Bulacan.

Earlier, several Liberal Party stalwarts also pledged their support for Mr. Macapagal by 2004.

They were Medicia Iranzo Representative Antonio Nachura and Reynaldo De Ocampo vice president for the Visayas, Manila Rep. Rodolfo Bacani, secretary general; Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, executive vice president; Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, vice president for Metro Manila; Quirino Rep. Junie Cua, Trade and Industry Secretary Mar Roxas and Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier.

Reaffirmation

In yesterday's meeting, Rep. Alfredo Marañon Jr., head of the NPC contingent in Cebu Province, reaffirmed the party's continued coalition with the ruling Lakas.

According to Lakas officials, the LP leaders' pledge, given ahead of the party's caucus and the sixth ruling of Senate President Franklin Drilon on LP dual, would boost Mr. Macapagal's chances of winning.

Aurigue del San Rep. Prospero Pichay said victory has been heralded by the recent Pulse Asia survey which showed the President's popularity steadily rising.

Pichay and Rep. Hermilo Pacsoncillo of Bulacan province said the survey gave Mr. Macapagal the highest rating with the Class E sector with 52 to 62 percent, followed by Poe with 52 to 59 percent.

They did not say when the survey was conducted.

"This (rating) is expected to soar as his pro-poor programs yield long-term positive effects," Pichay said.

'Abusing environment is stealing'

By Vick Comeros

NEWLY installed Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales has started shooting his "pinoy" salvo.

Rosales yesterday gave a dozen hours to earthy sources by leading his influence in a civil society exhibition or seminar to the environment.

"Under the new Catholic conditions, abuse of the environment is considered a violation of the 7th Commandment: 'Thou shalt not steal,'" said Rosales during the launching of the Leadership Institute for the Environment or LIFE, in La Salle Greenhills in Mandaluyong City.

"When you waste too limited natural resources, you are actually stealing from the next generations, from your own children and grandchildren," the 71-year-old prelate said.

Rosales, who succeeded Jaime Cardinal Sin as Manila archbishop on Dec. 21, said he was currently renewing his ecological campaign which started his earlier diocese stint in the province.

As Archbishop of Mahinhinlog, Bukidnon, Rosales was among the community leaders who led the protest against Royal Tropical Timber Corporation after three years of lobbying the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the province was declared clog free as in 1990.

But this success came in a bloody price. A parish priest, Fr. Rory Reiss, was murdered in Davao del Norte, and Rosales said it was because Reiss opposed the use of illegal loggers.

Rosales would later memorialize the slain priest in the book "Father Rory: Saint and the Church He Died For."

"Everything in nature has a number—even the air. And to kill one[illegible] he added. "I feel that we are now[illegible] we have to care or there," Rosales said.

LIFE executive director Bienvenido Sumbilla said he was not surprised that Rosales was going all out for his group, whose initial project is to come up with a scientific assessment of the environmental degradation in the areas surrounding Laguna de Bay and the Pasig River.

"In words and in deed, he (Rosales) has been ridding the life and that of his parents for the environment," Eusebio said.

Although formally launched only yesterday, LIFE has been active the past three months with volunteers from the regional Laguna Lake Inter to identify and evaluate ecological hotspots.

Military won't can 'boots' ad just yet

By TJ Burgonio

DON'T "salute-stalk" get boring after airing for months? They do, but the military doesn't mind.

Pro-military infomercial commercials on television – including one of a boy marveling at his soldier-father's new scalded boots and more loud on the table saving to a bigger pay check – continue to encourage government reward watchers like PFC Jimmy Mercado at to the United July 27 mutiny.

Military officials said the ads because they have to get "morale to stay" through to the ground troops to avoid another coup attempt.

"There's nothing wrong with (the) redundancy," said Armed forces of the Philippines chief of staff Gen. Narciso Abaya in an interview with the Inquirer. "The message is that the government is taking care of the soldiers, and the AFP is not as bad as the Magdalo group has painted it to be." He was referring to the 300 disgruntled officers and men who seized the Oakwood Premier hotel in Makati City.

The infomercials have several reasons that leap on the same theme – just rewards for hard soldiers and the futility of joining coups. The campaign was launched in August to counter the continued grievances about corruption, low pay and lack of housing, among other gripes.

Officials said the information drive was intended for an "internal audience," and clarified that it was a project of Gonzalo Jalandoni, presidential adviser on media and civil-military affairs, not the AFP.

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2 pilots bail out

[Text illegible] AIR Force pilots bailed out of an OV-10 aircraft at around noon yesterday leaving the attack plane to crash in the outskirts of Barangay Bitukang. No one was reported hurt on the ground.

Capt. Froilan L. Pano said his co-pilot, 1Lt. Peter Paul Lim, parachuted to safety and were picked up by troops of the 4th Force 710th Combat Group based in Hunggitan, said Maj. Bernilino Padilla, Air Force spokesperson.

Pano complained of leg pains but Lim was "up and about." They were taken to the V. Luna Medical Center in Quezon City for more tests, Padilla said.

The two had come from Puerto Princesa, Palawan and were on their way to the Zamboanga air field in Sangley, Cavite for the aircraft's "regular maintenance."

The OV-10's right engine malfunctioned and the left engine, while working, "caused the plane to lose precious altitude," Padilla said. TJ Burgonio

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, November 30, 2003
1st Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Jer 33:14-16

"The days are coming when I shall fulfill the promise that I made to the house of Israel and Judah.

In those days and at that time I will cause to spring for David a shoot of righteousness from David's line; he will practise justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will experience salvation and Jerusalem will live in safety. He will be called "Yahweh-Our-Righteousness."

2nd Reading: 1 Thes 3:12-4:2

May the Lord increase more and more your love for each other and for all people, as ours does for you. May he strengthen you inwardly to be holy and blameless before God, our Father, on the day that Jesus, our Lord, will come with all his saints.

So for the rest, brothers, we ask you in the name of Jesus, the Lord, and we urge you in him in a way that pleases God, just as you have learned from us. This you do, but try to do still more. You know the instructions we gave you on behalf of the Lord Jesus.

Gospel: Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus said, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish of perplexed nations when they hear the roaring of the sea and its waves. People will faint with fear at the mere thought of what is to come upon the world, for the forces of the universe will be shaken. And at this time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

"Now, when you see the first events, stand erect and lift up your heads, for your deliverance is drawing near."

"Be on your guard, lest our your hearts be weighed down with a life of pleasure, drunkenness and worldly cares, less that day catch you suddenly as a trap, for it will come upon all the inhabitants of the whole earth. Be watch at all times and pray, that you may be able to escape all that is bound to happen and to stand before the son of Man."

Commentary:

Advent is a time of preparation, a time of anticipation, a time to remember once again our hopeless state and sufferings, from which it is only we have returned to hope and to long for because our Lord Jesus is coming, has already come and will come again. This Christian hope is simple, our human tragedies and natural and cosmic calamities. As followers of Jesus, we need to know how to interpret the events of history as signs of God's liberation. Precisely the final end anticipates the judgement of man, which he has to make a choice, a decision whether for life or for death, between God or mammon, between paralyzed self, "Come, Lord Jesus, come!" refers not only to the birth of Jesus but also to the second coming of Christ in glory at the end of the world. We are therefore advised we may ourselves be prepared and to be vigilant. As we continue our journey in life, we are reminded again and again in this season of advent that we have a companion, a friend whose loving presence gives us hope to face bravely the darkness of this world and find our true Liberation. We are constantly moving forward towards the real time of God's Kingdom which is already here but not yet fully realized. Jesus is our companion who journeys with us and accompanies us to the Promise Land.

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Log poachers turn into agri entrepreneurs

By Veli Contreras

A UNIVERSAL Luzon community that once relied on illegal logging to meet all hunger is now a thriving livelihood organization that boasts some P2 million in assets, including swathes of reforested land, fish ponds, and vegetable farms.

The transformation of the Barlosa, Sarac and Samaral Dumaraos view the success story of the barangays in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija, which are now benefiting from a 1998 DENR initiative that turned timber poachers into agri-entrepreneurs.

In a report sent to the DENR main office in Quezon City the General Tinio Community-based Forest Management Organization said that of the 100 hectares awarded to its members five years ago, about 50 are now growing corn, mahogany and gmelina trees.

The rest of the land is now planted to cash crops like upland rice, corn, cowpeas, peanuts, papaya, citronella and mango.

P100,000

The first harvests of camphor trees, for the project, for example, netted up to P100,000 for one of the five smaller federations making up the GTCLFDMO. The organization has also reinvested into fish production, grass raising, bamboo dispersal and organic fertilizer manufacturing.

The group's 300 members originate around 200 families from former timber poachers—the poachers would endorse (harpe, timer) trees, and forged identities turning up to claim trees for non-existent.

But that's only half of the harvesting job. Income carrying and hauling them contributed on rafts down the nearby Rio Chico and Sumacabac rivers posed another back-breaker, and the report prepared by the DENR-Region III office.

The trees would attract forest guards, outlawers, and their dismissal with waiting wounds. They prefer trees about led to hard resistance with their wives and children, the report added.

In 1995, the five barangays saw violent confrontations between the poachers' families and government personnel—including the Army and DENR forest guards—to protect their trees from confiscation.

Alternatives

But livelihood alternatives opened up for General Tinio's desperate populace when the DENR launched the CBFM programs in 1998 with the help of Outreach Philippines International, a non-government organization tapped by the agency to implement the project.

The former poachers were trained not only in actual technical skills but also in making proper proposals and feasibility studies to be pitched before potential investors.

Organized and with newfound confidence, the once-timid, cynical residents now able to link up with resource institutions and government units for their needs.

But the foundation of their current was the security of tenure they got over parcels of forest land covered under the program. Under the CBFM, beneficiaries are given exclusive rights to till the land they occupy for 25 years under an agreement renewable for another 25.

The General Tinio federation was given total capital of P250,000. Since then, its assets has grown to P1.7 million, with more projects in livestock production in the works, the DENR reported.

3 Pinoy kids have fun with robots, win a medal

ROBOTIC KIDS with their Lego robot kits.

tournaments were given an hour-and-a-half to create their robots.

Third best time

Under time pressure, Ayle moved on the laptop-logging programmers, inputting instructions for their robot to follow once set into motion on the console.

Paulo and Ayle worked on the robot's physical and mechanical design.

A team is disqualified once a robot veers from the black line or stops moving for more than five seconds. Any team that easily bested the losing team.

The Philippine entry completed the course during the first of the two attempts allowed, and clocked the third best time.

Not a bad performance consideration, since these "Kinetic Architects" team—as the boys registered themselves during the contest—only got introduced to robotics last July as members of Lechiel's Robotics Club.

("Kinetic," the lawyers was limited or cold, was taken from "Kinetic Home Plans," the ultimate weapon of an animal warrior that is.)

Grace under pressure

The boys were not the boys last Wednesday in Makati City during a qualifying victory party thrown by their families.

Buried on their account and the boys brought to the competition the Filipino's knack for showing grace under pressure.

While the other kids looked serious and tense, the boys still managed to tease each other and share jokes) as the deadline approached," said Gilbert Tamora, their coach and club adviser.

Asked what he thought was their advantage over their competitors, Ayle said: "If you get too serious, you will lose."

The student then let down fingers seemed, but in Tagalog, of course, a appointing Paulo said.

The mild-mannered boy recalled with amusement that he even spotted some community crying when their robots refused to move.

Right attitude

Lechiel said the three boys—who belong in the eleven section—were chosen not necessarily because of their good grades in Science or Math, but because they displayed the "right attitude."

"We needed someone who could work with a team, who could handle pressure, who could show his and had good detective-making skills. He cannot assume that merely through grades," Tamora said.

This is where robotics as a learning and character-building tool is immense) can be most potent, he said.

"At the level of school children, robotics develops critical thinking, logic and problem-solving skills, which were displayed by our boys," he said.

Tamora said the team scored their training in the Lego robotics line which cost about P10,000 each. The team was sponsored by the Philippine Foundation for Science and Technology and the Ayle' local distributors. Pelt's Multimedia Inc.

Thinner wheels

Asked whether he consciously applied his Science lessons during the contest, Paulo cringed.

But according to one parent, Paulo said what he learned in Science to justify the group's decision to use large, thin wheels like those in a robot drawn-carriage for their robot, while most of their competitors used smaller, thicker ring wheels.

Thinner wheels create less friction with the surface when making turns, and this makes for more accurate turns, Paulo explained.

Ayle, who dreams of building a "gardener robot," said the team made a second decision to change the robot's design just five minutes before deadline because they believed that the program they had been practicing on for months was more complicated than what was needed for the 20-minute course.

It was this knack for snappy improvisation, Tamora said, that apparently distinguished the boys from their more technically advanced rivals.

'I dreamt of stars; I got a planet'

University of the Philippines in the Visayas, hoping to be a month-old doctor. But for lack of financial resources, I took the first job opportunity available—teaching.

Never did I regret that decision of hers. The day I crossed the classroom, I knew I would be an excellent teacher.

Rural school

My first eight years of teaching were spent in a rural school.

For lack of teachers in a proportion to the number of students, I taught not only biology but also other subjects outside my field such as English, music and physical education. The materials, equipment and facilities for the type of effective teaching I had in mind were lacking.

These challenges, however, did not dampen my enthusiasm. In fact, I became more creative and innovative.

I believe that teaching and learning should not be confined within the four corners of the classroom. The first years of teaching, I saw to it that the science concepts I discussed in class would have social dimensions.

Thus, I took an active role in school as moderator of the rural development and conservation committee. I designed outreach programs for students and teachers.

Through these programs, students were trained to teach primary health care to the people in the barangays. They also taught basic literacy to out-of-school youths. Simple extension trainings like seminar-workshops on natural oil, and gave lectures on environmental protection and conservation.

Greater challenges

These eight years prepared me for my graduate studies abroad. Finishing with the children of the poor instilled in me the importance of service, compassion and respect for human dignity. I have learned to love teaching, and I see it as an instrument for transforming the personal and the community.

But after eight years of teaching, I felt I had nothing more to give my students. I resigned and enrolled as a full-time student in MS Biology at the De La Salle University in Manila. I was lucky to get a scholarship that included free tuition and a monthly stipend.

It was great to be a student again. I remember the first time I went to a part-time lecturer in the biology department and as a research assistant for a senior researcher in the university. This I did on top of my full-time student load.

Had a ball

But I really enjoyed in my studies that I finished my master's degree in one year and five months only, after which the DLSU took me in as a full-time assistant professor.

Teaching college students at the DLSU was an entirely new experience. With students had sophisticated equipment at my disposal, my world opened to the wonders of scientific research.

However, I still valued the importance of service as a big inducement in me to my ecology students in the town of Dumaguete, the town of Bais), and the future of forest areas of Pamplanga to research field studies.

Pursuing my doctorate while teaching also enabled me to continue research that some personnel here and abroad.

Research is very exciting. It means sleepless nights, disappointments, physical and mental exhaustion. But the joy of discovering something new in nature makes it all worthwhile.

Bolo

While Manila provided me opportunities for professional growth, my heart was still in Bais. There, with an abbreviated budget and an additional one, I brought my family back to Bais in the summer of 1995.

In June of that year, the Philippine Science High School Southern Visayas hired me as a special scientist. I worked there only for one year of retirement, she valued my suggestions and experience. I helped develop its science research curriculum and introduced innovations for teaching the course.

After barely a year in the PSHS, I realized that my role was not only to teach students but to train teachers as well. That I did by organizing workshops for teachers in the region.

One day, I received a letter from the students. They said that they know I was being groomed for directorship of the school but that I was groomed me, not to the chocolate, but as coaches.

"The PSHS needs teachers like you. The Philippines needs teachers like you," they said.

Their letter touched me deeply.

'Song in our hearts'

When I won the Metrobank Foundation award in 1997 as one of the country's outstanding teachers, the PSHS community gave me a present. While students filled with signatures of the students, teachers and non-teaching staff.

At the center was a painting of a tree, and a message: "You are the song that plays in softly in our hearts; that gives us inspiration to be better persons and live up to the dreams in the seas of Batangas, the dream of Bikol, and the future of forest areas of Pampanga to research field studies.

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In 1998, I was chosen one of The Outstanding Young Filipinos (the only lawyer on the TOYM) on the field of secondary education.

Last year, I got the 2002 Outstanding Excellence in Teaching award in an international competition held on May 16-17 at Louisville, Kentucky.

I presented to the panel of judges and about 150 teachers from all parts of the world my method of teaching science to students in Bolo.

I told them that the Philippines is a Third World country blessed with abundant natural resources, but that we face problems such as poverty, the declining environment and the lack of equipment and facilities for scientific endeavors.

I said that faced with this situation, I introduced innovations and strategies for teaching the course.

These innovations, I said, included building a scientific library, conducting field studies, establishing linkages with research institutions in the country, holding science forums in schools, and teaching (science) laboratory and field techniques that would help them in their researches work.

The judges and teachers were amazed that even without capital-consuming equipment, my students were able to produce quality research output beyond their expectations.

Glorious moment

I went to Kentucky with three students from the Manila Science High School, and a student from the Mindanao State University—Iligan Institute of Technology.

They competed with 1,200 other students in the International Science and Engineering fair, which was held back-to-back with the teaching competition. The three from Manila Science competed for a team project in physics, and the one from Iligan competed for the individual category in microbiology.

May 17, 2002, was a glorious moment for the Philippine delegation. When it was announced that the Iligan Philippine delegation's project and plans to the grand award for microbiology, we were ecstatic. When it was announced that the students from Manila Science won first place in the grand award for physics, we were delirious.

When the awards ceremony had been, I was in teaching was announced, and for the first time in the history of the event an Asian teacher—a Filipino...won, there was a standing ovation from the crowd in the Philippine flag was raised in the air.

I told the Philippine delegation's road to success in Kentucky was far from smooth.

We almost never made it in the United States. We were able to get our visas at the last minute, and in the most unconventional way.

Sitting alone

Let me tell you the scenario during the first day of the teaching competition.

The table in front was occupied by the board of judges. The table at the right was occupied by the female from China and her supporters. The table at the left side was occupied by the American students and their supporters.

The center table for the Filipino Student was empty. I sat there alone.

I brought a CD for my presentation, as well as some transparencies and a white-board pen to use my CD wouldn't work. Coming from a Third World country, I was prepared for the worst.

It turned out that I was the only student without a notebook computer. An American student lent me his, but before doing so, he labeled me an impostor-and-a-spy.

I was the fourth presenter. When it was my turn, a panel member asked if I needed an interpreter. I said: "No, thanks."

Someone from had witnessed in me my presentation. I said: "I can do it."

Afterward, they said: "Wow, you're so cool. You know more than me!"

Filipinos can

What am I telling you? That despite our country's limited resources, Filipinos can compete globally given the proper training, support and exposure.

Our winning in the international scene may not reflect the general condition of science education in the country, but without concerted efforts, we can move this country forward and show the world that we are a globally competitive race.

Last May, I was in Cleveland, Ohio, to present my methods of teaching to 150 teachers from 17 countries. I also served as team facilitator for the Spanish-speaking teachers from Brazil, Costa Rica and Argentina.

Luis Amigo, I greet a dominican nation known to educators from the Third World countries of Laos and Cambodia.

Filipinos are indeed talented and still excel in the international level in their individual capacity. But as a country, we lag behind. This is because we lack the spirit of community that is very strong among progressive nations.

When I came home to Iloilo after the ISEF competition, my school gave me a very warm welcome. During the ceremonies, students and teachers expressed how proud they were of me.

I told them: "I am very proud of you, too. It is you who have brought me to where I am now. Our experiences together has brought world attention to the fact that boy, there's a world-class school out there in Iloilo, a school with world-class teachers and students.

I told the teachers—and I guess because celebrate Graduate Dr. Quiza—"Being world-class doesn't mean going international and showing our best out there. Being world-class is passion and commitment to our profession. Being world-class is giving our best to teaching. Being world-class means right inside the classroom."

In winning this international award, I do not claim to be the best teacher of the land. There are thousands of best teachers out there, working valiantly, giving their hearts to teaching, without thinking of benefits or rewards. I salute them.

In winning this award, I believe I was just recommended by somebody up there to deliver the message that Filipino youth can be world-class leaders. In winning this award, I have shown the world that Filipinos can be world-class if they choose to be.

And more importantly, I have shown my fellow Filipinos that they can be world-class if they choose to be. That if we do our best, we can conquer the world.

During the panel interview in Kentucky, one judge said me: "You have a Ph.D. in biology. Why do you want to teach high school?"

I answered: "And who will teach these kids?"

Another judge asked how much I am paid for all my gains. They were shocked when I told them that I am getting a net pay of less than $300 a month.

Job as minister

When your job becomes your mission, your primary concern is giving your best in everything you do. Knowing that you have contributed significantly to the development of a product that can make a difference in the community is reward in itself.

Believe in what you are doing. Believe that you can make a difference.

Believing, however, doesn't mean you have to stop where you are now. Believing is improving your skills and maximizing your potential. With determination and the will to win, you can conquer the world.

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Sunday
SPORTS

Editor Rodolfo S. Malonzo
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

TEX McCLURG (right) of Coca-Cola outleaps a shot against Dondon Continelli of Talk 'N Text during their game-5 tilt last night. The Tigers won, 83-81, to advance to the Finals. [redacted]

BEST-OF-SEVEN AFFAIR

San Mig-Coke series on

[redacted]

By Jun Mascarina

WITH little time to prepare, San Miguel Beer and Coca-Cola will rely on sheer talent and reserve energy when they plunge into the Samsung-PBA Reinforced Conference Finals today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Beermen and the Tigers applied for beams on their semifinal appearance last Friday setting up a best-of-seven championship showdown beginning with Game 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Although the Beermen clobbered the Anejo Rhinos and the Tigers beat the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals with relative ease on Friday, both teams feel exhausted and would need to regenerate fast to contend.

"I hope we could summon the energy fast we need against Jun Miguel Beer. As I've said, we're a very Cool team. We've been battling in the Finals since last season," said Coca-Cola coach Chot Reyes.

Reyes and the Tigers are on a fourth straight championship appearance dating back to the All Filipino Cup last season when Coca-Cola captured its first PBA crown on its rookie year.

The Tigers, however, weren't so lucky at last year. They failed to defend the All Filipino plum against the Shots 'Mo and lost to the Alaska Aces in the Finals of the Invitationals this season.

But with the addition of Tex McClurg, Jason Hopson and Ronnie Magsanoc, the Tigers would take home the Samsung title. Reyes noted that Derek Jansen, Jeffrey Cariaso, Mic Monreal, Johnny Abarrientos, Rudy Hatfield and Bali Bravo are blending perfectly with McClurg.

The Tigers will be pitted against a hot Miguel Beer squad, which has had a share of great moments and frustrations in the last few seasons.

San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico has savored the Beermen to a string of five titles beginning in 1999, dispatching highly-touted rookies Danny Ildefonso, Rodolfo Nolasco, Olsen Racela and Danny Seigle.

Angola rips Nat'ls

[redacted]

ANGOLA ripped the Philippine team, 90-78, on a day marked BYU's Alex Compton swallowed his name as the league's deadliest shooter in the showcase of the PBL Platinum Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

It was the RP cagers' first defeat in four exhibition matches.

[redacted]

No pep rally for RP bets

[redacted] is there no pep rally for athletes this time?

This was the question posed by an irate fan to the Philippine Olympic Committee yesterday after the athletes board for the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games started bonding without the usual fanfare.

POC first vice president Alvin Henderson, who is also the chief of the SEAG technical committee, thus pulled the athletes pep rallies to prevent international stares.

Henderson said it was the responsibility of the Philippine Sports Commission to arrange for such an event. [redacted] is based thousands of the non-athletes. M. Reyes

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Guaico

Baghdad trip no political stunt–Rice

CRAWFORD, Texas—President George W. Bush's national security adviser on Friday dismissed his lightning trip to Baghdad, describing it was a political stunt that inadvertently highlighted the chaos still blighting Iraq.

"Obviously, Iraq is still a dangerous place, and there's no secret to anyone," Condoleezza Rice told ABC television just hours after returning with Bush from the one-year Thanksgiving holiday visit.

But charges that the secrecy and security blanketing his two-and-a-half stop at Baghdad airport showed that Iraq has made little progress seemed misguided since the US-led March invasion are "just not true," she said.

"The troops are taking control of their own destiny. Most of the country remains quite stable. The troops are planning and looking forward to the transfer of sovereignty. They're taking care sometimes, schools are opening, all of those things are happening," she said.

Some critics, including the presidential campaign of retired general Wesley Clark, said the brevity and stunt-and-dagger nature of the visit—which the White House said as a seamless success—actually showed how little Washington has accomplished in Iraq since taking control in April.

"The trip highlights how insecure Iraq is and shows how we need to get our allies in to get the American face off the occupation," Clark spokesperson Jamal Simmons said.

"Hopefully President Bush is played, when he looked into the faces of those soldiers, that he owes them a concrete strategy in Iraq so that we can get back to the business of fighting the war on terrorism," said Simmons.

Concerns over rising insurgent violence led the White House to impose a new set of silences on media accompanying the president. Mindful of the risk of being easily swept from the Iraqi capital after a stay-confined to the air port.

Bush's Air Force One airplane made a special landing designed to limit its exposure to surface-to-air missiles, arriving only to running lights turned off and all shades drawn to prevent light from seeping out and giving away its position.

"Presidential trips require enormous security under any circumstances. Under this circumstance, it required even more extraordinary security but the president wanted to send a message," said Rice.

She also acknowledged that the missile attack earlier this month on a German DHL cargo plane had at least caused the White House to accelerate work, which was planned for weeks starting in mid-October.

"The DHL incident made people go back and take a look at whether we thought the plans would be safe going in. They decided it seemed that it was the safest and that it could be done," she said.

Rice also denied that the White House—which is famed for its aversion to political dissent—made the trip to bolster Bush's chances to win a second term in November 2004. AFP

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- Conduct consistent testing for vehicles owned by agencies and officials/employees;
- Adopt a "car-free day" at least once a month;
- Reproduce, register or distribute materials on Smoke-free EDSA and Clean Air Campaign in cooperation with DENR and other government agencies; and
- Announce reminders on clean air during flag ceremonies.

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- Have my vehicle tuned-up regularly;
- Buy clean diesel or motor oil for my vehicle;
- Have regular oil change for my car;
- Avoid leaving my vehicle idle/ idle mode for a long time;
- Clean my vehicle's air filter regularly;
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- Report smoke-belchers to the proper authorities;
- Walk or bike during short trips; and
- Stop burning my garbage.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

French court acquits 3 paparazzi in Diana crash

PRINCESS DIANA

PARIS—A Paris court on Friday ruled that three press photographers did not breach privacy laws when they took pictures of Princess Diana and her boyfriend Dodi Al Fayed on the night of their fatal car crash six years ago.

The court acquitted the photographers Jacques Langevin, Christian Martinez and Fabrice Chauvry after deciding that Diana and Dodi knew that they would be photographed as they left the Ritz hotel in the car moments before the accident.

The three had faced a maximum penalty of a year in prison and a fine of 45,000 euros ($53,000) if found guilty under France's strict laws banning invasion of privacy.

"This is an excellent decision, which confirms the principle of the freedom of the press and the right to information," said Martinez's lawyer Valerie Rousseau.

The national union of press organizing press photographers AN-JEPC Presse also welcomed the ruling.

"It is what we were hoping for. It is totally legitimate because though we have often heard that world paparazzi what they are is photo journalists. And what they did that night was what they always do: to catch circumstances, take pictures," it said.

The case came to court in a result of a civil suit filed by Dodi's father, Egyptian-born billionaire Mohamed Al Fayed, who had claimed a symbolic one euro in damages. Al Fayed immediately said he would appeal against the decision.

"They are basic another judge... who seems determined to keep the whole case after under the carpet, thereby aiding the continued cover-up," he said in a statement.

"The paparazzi played a crucial and cruel part in the tragedy and they should be punished," according to the statement, written on the letterhead of his Harrods department store. "Accordingly I have lodged an immediate appeal."

The three arrested were among the eight paparazzi and one driver who followed Diana and Dodi on the night of Aug. 31, 1997, when the pair were killed in a crash in a Paris underpass along with their bodyguard driver Henri Paul.

All were initially investigated on manslaughter and non-assistance charges but cleared before the case came to court.

Last month's hearing was the last time events surrounding the accident had come to trial. The main prosecutor asked for unspecified suspended prison sentences for the three, arguing that to acquit them would encourage press intrusion.

However, in its written ruling the court said that though the pictures had been taken of the intimate of the car—which is technically a private space—they had not revealed "any intimate gestures or behaviour" on the part of Princess Diana and Dodi Al Fayed.

The photographs had not "made public a sexual liaison or the relations between the couple [but] been the talk of the town throughout the summer," the court ruled. "You were they taken secretly, as the couple could not have known the cameras" they added having photographed when they left their hotel." AFP

Taiwan president promises to hold security referendum

TAIPEI—Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian Saturday unveiled plans to hold a referendum to "safeguard the country's sovereignty" on election day following the passage of a plebiscite law that has angered rival China.

"To protect the sovereignty of our country from any short threats and changes, I'm obliged and responsible to put this issue in conformation with the approval of the cabinet," Chen told a rally in the capital city.

He was referring to a clause in the law on the so-called "defensive referendum," which empowers the president to put to a popular vote "issues of national security concern" in the case of foreign threats.

China, which regards Taiwan as part of Chinese territory awaiting reunification after it split from the mainland in 1949 at the end of a civil war, has repeatedly threatened to invade the island should it declare formal independence.

Chen's pro-sovereignty Dec 11 presidential election days next year, we will be able to hold a referendum to safeguard the country's sovereignty and security," Chen said, amid cheers from supporters.

Taiwan's opposition-dominated parliament on Thursday passed a law endorsing for the first time the right to vote on constitutional issues including constitutional amendments, independence from China and changes in Taiwan's official name, flag and territory.

But it also set hurdles that would make such changes hard to achieve in practice, which China's state media has called a "weakened defensive" law that was a "great defeat" for Chen.

Voted down were key clauses allowing popular votes on a completely new constitution and Taiwan's future—namely reunification with China or independence —that had been put forward by the ruling, pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party.

"We may not be satisfied [with the law], but we have successfully made the concept of referendum acceptable for all the people including those who used to oppose democracy and reforms," Chen added.

On Friday, China said it was "gravely concerned" about the law and insisted it would never tolerate independence for the island, but it refrained from again threatening war.

"We are gravely concerned about the situation surrounding Taiwan's referendum law," said top unnamed spokesperson for the Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office.

"We are paying close attention to the development of the situation." AFP

JEM H-2A rocket carrying a pair of spy satellites lifts off from the launch pad at Tanegashima Space Center on a tiny southern Japan island, Mon. 29. AP

N. Ireland peace process shaken after hardliners triumph in poll

BELFAST—Northern Ireland's peace process suffered its biggest-ever blow on Friday when a hardline Protestant party opposed to the 1998 peace accord won the most seats in the province's powers-sharing assembly.

The success of the Protestant Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was matched by Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Northern Ireland's main Catholic paramilitary group, which first cut a truce moderate Roman Catholic party.

The DUP—which is opposed to the 1998 Good Friday peace accords that ended 30 years of bloodshed and bombings in the British province, has pledged not to deal with Sinn Fein, leading IRA to a quick resumption of the power-sharing assembly—suspended since October 2002.

But British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern issued a statement immediately following the results insisting that the Good Friday agreement remains the only way forward for the province.

"In our first view, the Good Friday agreement remains the only viable political framework that is capable of securing the support of both (Protestant and Catholic) communities in Northern Ireland," they said in their joint statement.

The election result dealt a serious blow to the credibility of David Trimble, the leader of the moderate Protestant Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) which won the 1998 elections but could muster only 27 seats this time around.

Sinn Fein beat its more moderate Catholic foes, the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), to capture third place.

Sinn Fein won 24 seats; the SDLP 16—no real reversal of the parties' showing in 1998 polls.

But it is the success of the DUP led by the 77-year-old Reverend Ian Paisley, which will cause most worry for the London and Dublin governments—the architects of Good Friday agreement.

After topping the poll with 30 out of 108 seats, the DUP will find it is in a strong position to demand renegotiation of the peace accords.

DUP leader Paisley campaigned on a promise that he would never resume power sharing with Sinn Fein, third in the poll. Several of Sinn Fein's members used to be combatants in the IRA, which since 1997 has observed a ceasefire in its armed struggle against British rule.

The DUP believes that too many concessions have been made to the Catholic community. The party is also angry because the IRA has yet to fully disarm five years after the Good Friday agreement were concluded.

Northern Ireland's assembly was born out of Good Friday and created unprecedented power sharing between former foes from the two communities.

But it has been suspended since October 2002 when London re-imposed direct rule after a spy ring linked to the IRA was discovered at the heart of the legislature, prompting a breakdown of mutual trust.

Following the election result, Blair and Ahern invited the main political parties to submit their views about removing certain aspects of the agreement. AFP

Japan blows up rocket carrying spy satellites

TOKYO—Japan blew up a rocket carrying two spy satellites for monitoring sensitive neighbor North Korea minutes after launching it on Saturday, echoing failures that dogged its space program in the late 1990s.

South Korea is believed to be developing nuclear weapons, and the satellites, along with two others launched in March, had been promoted as a significant boost to Japanese intelligence gathering.

The failure is an extreme embarrassment for Japan just weeks after neighboring China put a man into space. There was no immediate word on the cost of the launch.

The Japanese-made H2-A rocket was shown blasting off into a cloudy sky to applause from observers at the launch site on the ship island of Tanegashima, some 1,200 km south of Tokyo, where Japan's launch center is located.

Just minutes later, though, an announcement was made that the rocket would not be able to complete its mission and had been destroyed by the launch controllers.

The sky filled with spirals of greyish smoke.

"We verified ignition of the second stage, but after that we just didn't know," a launch official told reporters in Tanegashima.

According to NHK national broadcaster, one of the booster rockets may not have separated as planned.

"This was a real shock," said an official with the Cabinet Satellite Intelligence Center, which oversees the satellites.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi ordered the result "unfortunate" and directed officials to determine what went wrong as soon as possible, Kyodo news agency said.

The launch of the first two satellites earlier this year gave Japan its first independent means of monitoring North Korea from space at a time of growing crisis on the Korean peninsula over the exclusive communist state's nuclear ambitions. Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

US soldier killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A US soldier was killed Friday in a mortar attack on a base in northern Iraq as hundreds of Iraqis marched through the center of Baghdad in protest against the violence plaguing the country's reconstruction. After US President George W. Bush told his troops during a lightning Thanksgiving visit to Baghdad that the coalition would unravel over insurgents, former US first lady Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton spent the day in the city in Europe, police also moved against the Iraqi insurgency, arresting three alleged militants suspected of recruiting insurgents for suicide attacks in the country. Iraqi police and US forces closed off Baghdad's main commercial thoroughfare as hundreds marched through the city center to demonstrate against terror amid persistent fears of attack by anti-US insurgents or Islamic militants. AFP

EU 'big 3' strike deal

BRUSSELS, Belgium—The European Union's "big three" struck a deal Friday to give the bloc a military planning arm independent of Nato at a summit aimed at thrashing out a deal on the EU's first ever constitution. Sensitive issues, over the collapse of the euro zone's Stability and Growth Pact, EU foreign ministers met in Naples to work out the text of the historic constitution barely two weeks before a leaders' summit in Brussels. Ministers from the EU's 15 present and 10 incoming members states failed to make any headway in some of the biggest constitutional headaches—including national voting rights and the future role of the European Commission. Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini characterized the opening day of the two-day meeting, which he was chairing, as "constructive and positive. Britain, France and Germany came up with one breakthrough by signaling, after months of talks, what French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin described as "the basis for our ground" on an EU military planning operation. The EU facility would be more than a symbolic move originally conceived—at the height of the Iraq war—by Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg in what many saw as a pointed rebuff to the United States. AFP

RP OPEN

Mika nips Bata for 9-ball plum

By Dennis U. Erasa

MIKA Immonen, a crowd darling with his good looks and gentlemanly ways, posted a stirring 13-12 come-from-behind win over Filipino hero Efren "Bata" Reyes to ride the Ist Cafe Puro Philippine 9-ball Open at the Octagon Hall of the Robinson's Galleria.

Immonen, winner of the 2001 Cardiff World Open, trailed 6-10, but came back to spin to death the hopes of the well-loved Reyes. The Finnish ace also frustrated the Philippine challenge as he ousted Francisco "Django" Bustamante, 11-8, in the semifinals.

Though behind by two, Immonen never lost his composure, tying the pulsating match 11-11.

Greeted with thunderous applause, Reyes broke in the 23rd and deciding rack and after several salvoes, fooled a good shot for the three-ball in the corner pocket.

Reyes can hardly physically intend and his mission proceeded to elevate up and down the Filipino one of his most painful defeats.

Immonen won his second major title in the Philippines added his new talk to a second home. He downed German pride Ralf Souquet in the finals of the Stealth 10-ball Cue Classic this year.

The Final pocketed $20,000 of the $64,000 purse put up by sponsor Cafe Puro in this four-day gathering of the world's leading pool stars. The tournament was also made possible by the partnership between ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. and Pepsi Sports.

Reyes, who ousted compatriot Leonardo "Leobong" Jordan, 11-17, in the semis, earned $16,000. Bustamante settled $8,000 each.

Earlier, Reyes was elevated to the Hall of Fame of the Billiards Congress of America.

Alumni "Paulo" Papal, president of Papal Sports and Elmer Mayuga, vice president of ABS-CBN Sports, graced the awarding ceremonies.

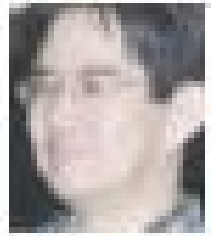
Surprisingly, Reyes surrendered his four frames to Immonen in this all-time break-and-run and ended 0-6. Jordan, however, bailed as Bustamante survived the tournament ranks.

As Reyes watched intently, Immonen, who learned playing as a teenager in Colorado Springs City, missed an easy shot on the 6th ball in the 13th rack, giving Reyes the needed opening.

MYTH: Immonen ties the 6th ball to Jordan

Puyat sees gold rush in billiards

By Ray Lucero



PUYAT

If it takes several, but Ricardo Puyat, regarded as the godfather of Philippine billiards, doesn't want to predict how many gold medals the Philippines team would win in the coming Vietnam-Southeast Asian Games.

What he's certain is that the star-studded contribution to the national team would be substantial.

Even with his words—the legendary Efren "Bata" Reyes and the renowned Francisco "Django" Bustamante—arrested, Puyat couldn't visualize the gold board for the simple reason that Puyat Sports, which has been bankrolling the international stalwarts of Reyes and Bustamante, has no say on how their teams talents could best be utilized in the pool events set in Ho Chi Minh City.

That privilege is left to the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, the local ruling body.

Ali Peyat, also the president of the Metropolitan Association of Billiard Halls Owners, could do a hope that Reyes and Bustamante

Wind Blown race festival set Dec. 7 at Santa Ana

A RACING extravaganza honoring the country's most celebrated galloper, Wind Blown, will be held on Dec. 7 at the Santa Ana Park.

Organized by Wind Blown's owners, prominent sportsman/lawyer Ingrasia, in cooperation with the Philippine Racing Club, the affair dubbed the "Wind Blown Racing Festival" pays tribute to the multi-titled horse who has brought every racing fan's fancy over a spectacular career that spanned four years.

"I'd like to share with all of my fellow owners, breeders and racing fans alike that very special day as we honor Wind Blown, a horse whose no-holds all quests to roar and salute," said Ingrasia, who early last month officially announced Wind Blown's retirement to stud.

"The event does not only augur well for the racing and breeding industry. It is also worthy of people from all the sectors of the industry coming together on that particular day marking how much Wind Blown has propelled the sport of horseracing," added Ingrasia.

Highlight of the festival is the farewell gallop of Wind Blown prior to the running of the inaugural Wind Blown Classic where the finest thoroughs in the land, including those who have ever against the multi-millionaire horse, are competing.

A short but colorful ceremony has also been laid out for the excellent, all-surpassing-demed owner honoring a horse who had made a strong impact in the resurgence of local racing industry, which is also backed by the Philippine Racing Commission and Philippine Racing Club.

Star jockey Jeffil Zarate will guide the Santa Wind in fly their purgrey when he gallops for the last time around the track, while 100 stage star Ramon Ayamanko will render the highly-charged "Wind Blown" ditty he composed with Micky Mandia and Noli Auditor as an aperitif to a three-talk concert to be held later in the day at the Santa Ana parking lot.

Planning parties in the "Idolos Idol" concert will also be rushed, while a photo exhibit depicting Wind Blown's glorious celebrities, Ingrasia added that Wind Blown cups and T-shirts will also be given to fans.

Wind Blown, dubbed "The King of Philippine Racing," tallied a remarkable 26 wins (24 stakes events) in 49 outings and retired as the richest local galloper of all time with P5,870,000.50 in earnings.

Ingrasia announced Wind Blown's retirement following the horse's spectacular win in the 6th Manila Breeders' Cup Classic last June 21. The Pearce Mandaluyong-trained gallopet bred by Emily Javier entered the history books by becoming the first horse to rule it for three consecutive years.

Prior to that, the two-time horse of the Year awardee won in the Philodelphians Cup Classic and Saddle and Club Special where he made his comeback race following a six month hiatus.

Among those vying for supremacy in the Wind Blown Classic (1,800 meters), a preview of the coming Presidential Gold Cup, are Golden Sadler, True Velvet, Dilmaday, Serenity Maiden, High Dictator, Wind Bound, Upmount, Material Stakes, Perfect Storm, Red Star Rising, Silver Diary and What's Magic.

(SOLERNA (right) and Zarate guiding Wind Blown around the winner's circle after the Manila Breeders' Cup Classic

'Da King' meeting 'The King'?

LAST Sunday we were all witness to a race won by a champion.

Nicknamed a double dar stallion drawn by Wind Blown is indeed extraordinary and unique.

I say this because looking at this horse closely we found out even TVL he seemed like he knew everybody was expecting him to win. He knew that the crowd (all shouting his name as he traveled the last stretch) wanted to see a hero.

He did not disappoint them, he made them all proud. He entered the winner's circle looking fully well that he lived up to the expectations of hygiene of his followers.

Wind Blown was the epitome of a true-blooded champion. Sense that he will retire he went will be hard to accept, especially after having shown time and again that he's very above class, just like what he did in winning the Manila Breeders' Cup Classic.

The champion, however was look at him, seems ready for any challenge that may come along his way. Many differing views will come out, but the right direction must be followed, after all, there indeed is life after racing in the thoroughbred world.

I'm sure time will come when the dancing Ayamanko will be present right in their celebration of the most celebrated racehorses in Philippine history.

So it is just fitting, racing fans say, that an honor be accorded Wind Blown.

And that comes in the form of the "Wind Blown Racing Festival" on Dec. 7, an event which in less than Wind Blown's owner and prominent sportsman Ingrasia organized in cooperation with the Philippine Racing Club, which has been witness to the immense following of the super horse.

We heard that horse owners/breeders have supported this event by way of making sure it becomes not only a success but a spectacular event—truly befitting performance of the champion.

Going beyond different philosophers on the sport, each and everyone agrees that Wind Blown's marketing potential is of, festive and positive, it is for this reason that many known personalities have called on Mr. Ingrasia to consolidate to the successful planning of the incident which he has graciously forwarded to the organizing people of PRCI.

Knowing Mr. Ingrasia and his passion for the sport, he will leave no stones unturned, strives to the much-awaited racing spectacle.

"Hinggapanahunod ako sa PRCI sa handling negotiations. Mismong araw ni Wind Blown, nan ko na maging makakakuhan ang sana ng mga mahahalagang sa mga mga mga tulad niya ng kayo sa pagkilala ng mahalaga lalong sa hinggan ni Wind Blown sa kanilang ng kanyo ngayon, lagpas ang sentimental tiyo ay nagpadilang pag-asa sa lahi pang naging popular ang lipat ng karera," said Ingrasia.

It is because of the outpouring support of various industry people that Ingrasia is making sure that racing fans will get a treat on this day, never seen before in Philippine racing.

"Para sa mga tarong fans ang araw na ito. Alalahin ninyo ito!"

On Sunday, the country's most famous horse will make his final gallop with Jeff Zarate aboard prior to the running of the inaugural Wind Blown Classic.

Fans will also have for the first time a special song on Wind Blown to be rendered by pop singer Ramon Ayamanko, ex-Ogie Alcasid, as we earlier reported.

I had a chance to hear the song penned by Ayamanko in collaboration with Micky Mandia and Noli Auditor and it goes no an advisable note, the same feeling every horseracing would surely have once Zarate helm it out for us Sunday.

As for the owners and breeders, no matter what group they're associated with, Dec. 7 is the time for them to show that unity can also be achieved in Philippine horseracing.

Will Wind Blown's "special" come? The heyang horse-we'll be there to check their attendance.

***

The hotbed rumor going around on and off the tracks is that PRI, "The King" of Philippine markets, is keen on grabbing Dec. 7 members at Santa Ana to avoid Wind Blown, "The King" of Philippine racing.

That would be one for the books. As they say, observant

Staunch Ally, Dandansoy head PSA Cup cast

DYNASTIES Ally and Dandansoy will lead the seven-horse stud competing in the second Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Cup today at the Sta Cruzan Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite.

Held to honor the late Rudy Stanciers, former sports editor of Tempo and an avid racing enthusiast, the one-mile (1,600-meter) race will be run by champion Lord of All, Don Antonio, Southern Charm, Sorosa and Mitchlee, and imported horse Royal Castle.

A guaranteed prize of P240,000 awaits the winner of the race sponsored by the Philippine Racing Commission headed by their

ITSELF BY MR. 000

Jimmy Uday, and hosted by the San Lazaro Leisure Park.

"The Philippine Racing Commission has always supported the cause of the PSA by holding benefit races for the country's oldest media organization and for this are, in the PSA, are eternally grateful to the Philoxcon and Mr. Ding," PSA 1st vice president Carmen said. "I hope this partnership will continue for the good of both camps," he added.

Carmen also thanked SLLP and lawyer Atty. Ivan Reyno for hosting the event for the second time.

Race 1—1. Agay 2. Dalang Bhebieb 3. Elita Rio

Race 2—1. Gentlemen's Lady 2. Ma's Splendid 3. Bella Kerry 4. Hope

Race 3—1. Mr. Dhenk 2. Captain Shane 3. Strong Colony

Race 4—1. Order of Merit 2. Mic Big 3. Classic Tower 4. O'Colleen

Race 5—1. Mikee Pride 2. Britney's Magic 3. Sticking

Race 6—1. Bobbie Babe 2. Eclipse Pic 3. Ana Mori

Race 7—1. Golden Tale 2. Sovereign Queen 3. Lady Victoria 4. Rainshelter

Race 8—1. Sunny Son 2. Adam's Call 3. Genuine Gentlemen

Race 9—1. Wing Commander 2. Queen of Cats 3. Fun Be

Race 10—1. Munich Ally 2. Dandansoy 3. Royal Castle 4. Bindiana

Race 11—1. Party Said 2. Kashpek 3. Silver Lining 4. Super Dream

Race 12—1. Kings 2. Kathy Rose Time 3. Chosen Ace

Race 13—1. Knot Bite 2. Hot Rotie 3. Miss Mahal 4. Crystal Rose

Race 14—1. Little Sam 2. Exchange Deal 3. Profit Master 4. Gold Horizon

Mano-Mano meet on tap

GESTA

VISAYA

THE FIRST Mano-Mano challenge, a full-contact martial arts competition, gets under way Dec. 27 at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City.

More than 200 fighters from various martial arts clubs all over the country have registered for the martial arts event that features the best in stand-up fighting.

The organizing CESAG is assured the number of participants to 24 fighters who were chosen for their excellent fight credentials.

Eight players will battle it out for the crown in each of the weight categories: lightweight (61 kg and below), middleweight (65-71 kg) and heavyweight (72 kg). He one to become champion, he would have to beat three different fighters in one night.

Due to the huge turnout of registrations for the first Mano-Mano, CESAG managing director Ed Linsen said he would conduct regional eliminations soon next year to screen the best fighters that will represent their respective clubs in the national Mano-Mano championships.

Marvin Gesta, a young fighter from Manila, is representing boxing. Gesta is slowly making a name in professional boxing as possessing his unbeaten kind 10-win record.

Gesta will be up against veteran and undefeated jousy Jhon Rghien Jaime Visaya from Baguio City's Wing of the Champions.

Puyat sees gold . . .

From page B-12

teams be divided in the 8-ball and 9-ball, versus where they're awarded medal honors, in the billiards meet set Dec. 2-13.

Puyat doesn't mind a repeat of the Busan team contest incident, which saw the other contending countries celebrate upon learning that Reyes and Bustamante were entered elsewhere. And, as it turned out, Reyes settled for a bronze while Bustamante had to share the gold with Mexican Lindig in the 9-ball doubles.

"I really have no idea. It's up to the BSCP and the POC (Philippine Olympic committee) to decide where Reyes and Bustamante would be of utmost help," said Puyat. "Whatever it is, we'll be supportive."

To make sure that her wards would be good on the money in case of a final-up, Puyat had entertained their fans to the POC library via "Times gets Reyes, Bustamante's are making financial sacrifices for the sake of the country, they deserve to be treated well," said Puyat, hoping that Reyes and Bustamante were supposed to compete in a $1 million tournament in the United States late this year. Upon knowing that Reyes and Bustamante couldn't go, the organizers accepted to Puyat's request that it be moved early next year.

With the lesser level of competition in the 15th Games, Puyat is optimistic the billiards and snooker players would again deliver the gold in Vietnam.

After all, they accounted for 3 golds, 6 silvers and 1 bronze in the 2001 Manila Jumpin' edition even without honoring Reyes' and Bustamante's contest to the max.

Now, Puyat wants them to take charge.

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OPINION

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Drama

Editorial

ON OCCASION, leadership requires a sense of theater. Consider US President George W. Bush's lightning visit to Baghdad last last week. The advocacy of the Thanksgiving Day trip aside, he heightened the dramatic effect: the commander in chief of the world's most powerful military dropping unannounced in combat-torn Iraq's capital.

If all it takes to run a country is to stage memorable photo opportunities, Fernando Poe Jr., the movie actor and acknowledged director who declared his candidacy for president last Thursday, will feel right at home in Malacañang. The president of a country must learn to use the resources at an actor's disposal: the ability to act according to a script, the flexibility to change scripts at a moment's notice, the emotional capacity to empathize with people from all walks of life, the ability to symbolize other people's hopes and dreams.

Poe's supporters have no difficulty seeing him in this light: it is a role he has mastered over the years.

But there must be more to the photo opportunity than mere photography, more to the sound byte than sound and fury.

A public outraged by a leader's deception or lack of performance can eventually turn on him. Bush, by a twist of fate, is also a case in point here. In a display of political choreography even more unforgettable than the two-and-a-half-hour visit to the Baghdad International Airport, Bush landed on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln last May 1, wearing a flight suit, to declare the end of "major combat" operations in the invasion of Iraq.

Since his declaration, hundreds of American soldiers have continued to die in Iraq, inevitably, the daily casualty list took its toll on his approval ratings, bringing them down to their lowest since the terrorist strikes of September 11.

Poe's close friend and fellow actor, deposed President Joseph Estrada, is another example. In his inaugural address, Estrada denounced public disembroidery with cronyism and corruption with his stirring "Walang kokompromiso, walang kompare . . ." declaration. His forthright denunciation of a culture of corruption and influence-peddling by family members and friends seized the national imagination. In time, however, the words came back to haunt the head of state who confirmed with a "midnight Cabinet" and looked after interests with government deals.

The truth is, much of the work of the President is drudgery: starting with local chamber officials, reviewing the paperwork on yet another tranche of foreign loans, sitting down with know-it-all journalists, traveling to remote locations, presiding over meeting after endless meeting. Much of the work is policy-oriented: which provisions go into a measure that Malacañang will certify as urgent, which products to champion at the next trade talks. Much of the work is cheerlessly political: attending weddings, checking up on senators who are pro-administration only in name, raising money for the next election.

To survive the grind, a man who would be chief executive, or a King who would be President, would need more than simple sincerity, more than common sense.

No laughing matter

Foreign Comment

WITH ONE of the most successful and economic musical recording stars of all time having a likely trial before a room full of jurors, and possibly the living means of millions of entertainment lawyers, there may be a tendency to minimize the seriousness of the charges.

But Michael Jackson is accused of molesting a child...the second time he has been charged with such accusations in little over a decade.

It's a serious, horrendous accusation. It is not the fantasy plot of a fictitious made-for-TV movie. It is not a tabloid-engineered, sensationalized "scoop" that offers an earth-tonight exclusive once-over story.

It has the hardship of various candy Hollywood, but this is real. If the charges are true, then a 12-year-old child has been terribly traumatized by a trusted adult, which is the case for so many child-abuse victims. If the charges are not true, then Jackson, no matter his quirkiness, numerous surgeries and physical metamorphoses, has been falsely accused of a crime for which recovery is almost impossible.

This is serious. The accused may have been the subject of numerous jokes, but child molestation is never a laughing matter.

The Post-Standard (Syracuse, New York)

None of the above

Separate Opinion

Jaygard A. Cruz

THE BRIEF caused a stunning setback to the decision of King Fernando Poe Jr. of the Movies to yield to the urgings of some supposedly responsible leaders that he run for President of the Philippines next year. Among them is no less than Sen. Edgardo Angara, president of the Liberal Party, which is dying. Perhaps, who hopes the no-longer-shy actor will be the standard bearer of a united opposition against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

For a belabored for lack of political experience, never having held public office before even as only barangay councilman. He is also faulted for being a high school undergraduate, compared to his best friend and compadre Dr. Ig-, who was at least a college drop-out and was momentarily municipal mayor, senator and vice president before he became president of the Philippines.

FPJ's defenders say his political inexperience is somehow a political innocence that will enable him to settle on a clean slate without the unsavory political machinations of a previous government record. It may also whatever against his painting to compassion, of which there will be many if he is elected, to his as yet unstilled integrity. They further argue that intellectual prowess may itself be dangerous in the hands of an unusual president as proved by the overbred Jefferson Davis or other egomaniacs of previous generations like US presidents Roosevelt and Nixon.

As for those who say seven (correction, nine) US presidents never went to college, how would that irrelevant fact affect us in our own native land? And assuming that it should, how about the other 24 American presidents who finished college ranks our current one (Bush Jr.)? A college degree does not necessarily guarantee competence and integrity, but (perhaps) it would prefer an educated person to an uneducated delinquent as president of the Philippines. I do not believe that the students of Ateneo should disqualify all other college graduates as potential Magsaysays (university of entering Malacañang.

More than FPJ's in the race and will probably be chosen as the official nominee of the LDP President Macapagal hopes to emulate him with another darling of the masses—Sen. Noli de Castro. Kabayan is a formidable vote getter and topped the last senatorial selection as an independent candidate. Although he has done precious little in the Senate since then, he is already in all presidential surveys, which may be why he has not responded to the Lakas appeal that he agree to be the President's running mate. Maybe his losses at ABS-CBN want him to run for the presidency itself, and he is only modestly waiting for their matching orders.

De Castro's academic credentials are also unknown; maybe he and FPJ share the same IQ. This is not to much either of them but only to stress that any person seeking to be the president of the Philippines should be able to show that he has adequate mental preparation in small of only the ability to read and write, which may not even be required of the ordinary voter. Add to that brilliance, on the movie screen and fluency in reading the TV id on boards are not sufficient qualifications for the highest office in the land.

It is likely that the Arroyo crowd will again have a big say in the elections next year, perhaps their ways will be decisive as in 1998, when they elected their own twin, Joseph Estrada over his better qualified rivals. Erap was control soon enough but his followers may not have learned from their dangerous folly and may exhibit it again in favor of whoever shows his with their lack of political judgment and commitment.

That person may be Poe or De Castro, or it may be Pueblo Lacson, who has not yielded his fight although he was at the moment he upstaged by the two popular entertainers. He has several criminal offenses hanging over his head, but he has weathered them so far. The Erkki Rein Supino recently ordered him but later reversed although she may endorse him again—who knows? The embattled GMA has become tiresome with her TV and radio spots, as well as personal appearances even at popular concerts, but she is at least in control of the administration and its resources. And those in the opposition who have the crowd-drawing the transcends Estrada and Roperto cannot help his also small slogan Demokrasya muth-.

And how about Sen. Loren Legarda, who seems to run for vice president under whatever party is willing to accept her? I think this is the height of political opportunism, and I said so in this space before. Loren may be the smartest senator but she is more denying my criticism and insisting that she is always guided as a public servant by the national interest and not personal ambition. As her high-falutin' pronouncements have not changed my mind a bit, being already invited to still serving political sanctimony. I will simply do what we in the provinces call "Bahala na," murder and fluency in reading the TV id on boards are not sufficient qualifications for the highest office in the land.

It is likely that the Arroyo crowd will again

Ready?

Moments

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE TEXT of is told about two fishermen, Juan and Pedro, sharing a bottle of gin one starry December night. They talked about their dreams: living rich, their children, their house and their dreams. When the topic turned to country and politics, they had a lot, literally a lot to say and so had one more bottle to share. Finally, Juan looked up at the sky with a sigh and said, "You know, pare, when I see the stars, I am reminded of our personal needs of politicians." "Why because they are bright?" asked Pedro. "No pare, it is because they are so corrupt (corrupt)," replied Juan. (Bahaging tawa, sa tumbling)

* * *

The Gospel today (Lk. 21, 25-28, 34-36) speaks about signs in the sky before the coming of the Son of Man in a cloud with power and great glory. There will be trials and tribulations when these things begin to happen. Jesus says that we must stand erect and raise our heads because our redemption is at hand. Jesus exhorts us to be vigilant at all times and pray. That is what Advent is all about, a time to prepare our hearts and mind our lives for the coming of Christ.

* * *

As we come toward the end of this year, let us first be filled with thanksgiving. In spite of our troubles and travails, we are still alive. Let us be grateful for what we have and when we still have rather than be depressed over what we do not have or, do not yet have. In a text message put it, if you keep saying THANK YOU for whatever in this life, someday, when the gates of heaven will open for you, you will hear the words "WELCOME HOME."

* * *

Instead of fright and anticipation, the Lord reminds us today to do our best and, to God, leave the rest. Instead of being depressed, we must continue to have hope. Come to think of it, many things we worry about never happen. Anticipation is oftentimes worse than reality.

* * *

A beautiful Christian memoir happened last week when I heard the confession of a married man, who decided to let go of a relationship which he really wanted for was against God's law. It was painful for him to let go of his friend, but, he wanted to be at peace with God and with his family once more. This, he said, was a part of his preparation for Christmas. The other part was to build up his breaking home, and to really be of help to others people. I admire his sense of goodness, and his willingness to let be, to let go and to let God. The life of my office with a beautiful smile, hearing the face of one who has been forgiven, is there any area of your life that needs healing? Let be, let go and let God, and you too will be at peace.

* * *

If God called you now, would you be ready? We all know that we will have our Creator someday, and yet we do not prepare for it. We are so busy with either "more important things" in this life like wealth, excess, prestige, retirement, right? Wrong! Nothing is more important than living a meaningful life now and for eternity. Advent should make us focus on what is really important in our lives.

* * *

I have met and prayed over many cancer patients, and "patient" is precisely the word to apply about the them. It takes a lot of patience to live a day at a time, especially those who suffer untold pain day and night. I admire their courage and determination to live on, and to hold on, that cancer you has a malignancy only, but it helps people prepare for the next life. It also helps people to live more meaningful lives now. Cancer makes people live quality lives. They realize what is truly important and essential in life, and this enables them to face even death itself with meaning. As someone beautifully put it, cancer patients aren't dying. They're living until the same, at last.

* * *

When you come to the end of the day, can you smile and say "I've done my best"? The best one does is that we keep on trying. Let us not lose sight of the time when we will have to make a full accounting of what we are and what we have done. I've said it before, and I say it again: you can get away with it before people sometimes, but not all the time. And definitely, before God. The truth will be as clear as day, so, live an honest and a good life now, so that when that time comes, you will hear Him say: "Welcome, my child!"

* * *

Dec. 8 is the Solemnity of Immaculate Conception. To honor the Blessed Mother, we will launch our book "Inquirer Rosaryan" (Lourdes Basa of my Sunday column in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Part-2). 3 p.m., at the Chapel of the Holy Rosary Seminary, Quezon City. At 6 p.m., we will have the Eucharistic celebration, and the launching of "A Shrine by the Sea" by Mount Philippines. After the Mass, we will have "Ave Maria," a concert of classical music and songs headed by Ed de Leon and his generous group of artists and musicians. Admission is free. For Marian Martyr's day also the 43rd birthday of my Mama. See you!!

* * *

A Moment with the Lord:

Lord, help me to prepare for your coming by living a good life now. Amen.

The mirror of her soul

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

LAST week, I wrote about the late Brig. Gen. Jose Gentiroms, a member of PMA Class 1953, who received the long-delayed accolade of "four-star" during his final year at the Academy. I mentioned a first of my supervisors as a plebe serving the last-called staff at catalinas. For lack of space, I missed a few items which I wanted to include. So here, therefore, in other words, here are some of the anecdotes which were left out.

When I reported to the battalion staff table for duty the first order of the day was to find out the first name, middle name and last name of the four upperclassmen who were "on duty" that morning. To provide convenience in the form of some jokes, we demand. Well, some difficulty. I was able to comply with the first order and to this day, I still remember the names: "The Baron of first captain," who deigned to call me "Farolan," in the most condescending manner. Then there was "Jesus" Jose Ventura Sontiyuan, the training officer was "Ignacio Ignacio Villadelgado, and the logistics officer was "Ismael Cruz Reyes. Now, don't think my memory is unexplainable, good because these days, I sometimes overlook how many strokes I actually made on a hole. But of course, my good friends remind me of my arithmetic.

But going back to my "roll-call assignment, when I later reported to "our table" for supper, just before entering the dessert, called for a joke to brighten up an otherwise dreary evening atmosphere. My mind must have been overdrive, but I managed to come up with something. It turned out to be a complex, convoluted things really like on the golf course

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to [illegible]

Editor Jose V. Sarmiento Jr.

How do we stop kidnapping?

THE FUNERAL of slain kidnap victim Benri Clear Ky, a 32-year-old executive of Coca-Cola, turned into a huge rally for the reinstatement on the execution of people convicted of heinous crimes.

"Death to kidnappers," and "Justice for Benri Sy" were among the streamers unfurled during the funeral, which was attended mostly by Chinese Filipinos, the prime target of kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

Taking his cue from the Chinese Filipino community, Manila Rep. Harry Angping has filed a resolution calling for the immediate implementation of the death penalty law, which, he believes, will deter kidnapping.

The Citizens' Action Against Crime claims that the country has found itself in the worst kidnapping situation in a decade. It says more than 100 cases of abduction have been recorded so far this year.

The surge in kidnapping has prompted some lawmakers to accuse anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes of not doing his job. But the killing of the leader of the country's most-wanted kidnap-for-ransom gang in Dinalupihan, Bataan a day after Sy's kidnapping was solved silenced some of his critics. Despite the strong lobby from the Chinese-Filipino community, President Macapagal-Arroyo has not lifted the moratorium on the death penalty, saying that the execution of hardened criminals has not deterred the commission of heinous crimes.

The key to preventing kidnapping is a vigilant citizenry, a no-nonsense police force and an effective judicial system.

Our fight deserves every sector's support

By Angelo T. Reyes
Anti-kidnapping presidential adviser

There is no doubt that lifting the moratorium on the death penalty can be a deterrent to kidnapping in the country. However, true as it maybe, we rather look at it as just one aspect of the solution.

The strategy of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf) is four-pronged—effective deterrence, neutralization of active kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) groups, filing of appropriate charges against those involved in kidnapping and swift administration of justice.

In recent weeks, the kidnapping happenstance has struck again and has caused fear and trepidation in society, specially the Chinese-Filipino community. While the incidence of kidnapping has actually decreased in October and November, the recent kidnapping of Benri Chua Sy and a 20-year-old girl has boggled the headlines.

President Macapagal-Arroyo signed Executive Order 268 on Oct. 26 creating the Office of the Anti-Kidnapping Presidential Adviser, and I, retired cop, Naktaf, to address the menace of kidnapping in the country and to stress the government's resolve to neutralize it.

No child's play

Addressing the kidnapping menace is no child's play. It is in fact a herculean task and someone has to do it. However hard the task, Naktaf will toil day and night to ensure that kidnappers do not roam free to violate people and hold hostage the nation's peace and order.

The prospect for a kidnapping-free Philippines will be brighter if we are united.

We are in the midst of a daunting battle against kidnapping. I believe that our fight deserves every sector's support and cooperation.

As the incidence of kidnapping continues to rise, so does the government's resolve to neutralize it. Naktaf works to address the menace. The government is firm in its resolve to end this problem. We will more than drown all evil with all the capabilities of our law enforcement apparatus.

Public support

Naktaf's objectives include the neutralization of targeted kidnap-for-ransom groups, the reduction of the vulnerability of victims, strengthening of public support, creating a safe and secure environment in Metro Manila, and bringing the kidnappers behind bars.

Since Oct. 26, Naktaf has chalked up modest accomplishments in improving its operational capability, organizing its legal teams and cracking down KFRG.

On Oct. 3, Roberto Diokno Sng, the leader of the most notorious Okoles KFR group was killed by PNP elements during an encounter in Dinalupihan, Bataan, together with three of his companions. The other members of the gang were captured during follow-up operations in Nueva Ecija.

In terms of capability development, Naktaf has enhanced its operations center, improved the communications and mobility of operating units and hooked up its technical intelligence capability.

Legal offensive

To strengthen its legal offensive, Naktaf has asked the Department of Justice and National Prosecution Service to accelerate the prosecution of cases. In turn, NPS has created a Task force of 20 special prosecutors to work on this.

Naktaf has combined the competencies of police and military intelligence units to go after the remaining active KFRG groups.

Despite these, Naktaf knows that the challenge remains formidable. To defeat and deter kidnappers, new capabilities and approaches need to be developed and undertaken, such as the following:

1. Increase police visibility by creating police/security outposts, and directing police officers to "walk their beat," in tandem with this, establish mobile and motorcycle checkpoints.

2. Augment police presence and capability with the strength of the former forces of the Philippine Allowing AFP personnel to serve duty alongside their Philippine National Police counterparts in strategic spots, such as the gateways to Manila, near malls, and in difficult spots will boost the kidnappers' options to dislike.

3. Secure the reinstatement of extraordinary and local government units particularly the Metro Manila Development Authority, and make them aggressively contribute in the continuing campaign against kidnapping.

The kidnappers shall not be allowed to get away with this evil. We shall not stop until these KFR groups are arrested and brought to justice. I ask our kababayans to be vigilant at all times.

The Naktaf...with your help...shall meet the problem of kidnapping with more force and greater resolve. We will meet force with force.

We all have to be together in this fight. Let us all clear ranks to make our country a better and safer place for our children. There is no better place for kidnappers than behind bars.

Implement the death penalty

By the Chinese-Filipino Community Peace and Order Coordinating Council

Kidnapping for ransom (KFR) are getting bolder. Once again it strikes fear in our communities. The killing of 32-year old Benri Chua by brazenly violates the peace of our land.

She was an outstanding student and a successful executive. We are saddened and enraged by the loss of such a promising life. Barely three days after, a 16-year-old girl was brutally abducted in front of her school.

Regardless of the motives for the kidnappings and despite the unusual circumstances surrounding the death of Benri, these crimes must be solved.

Guided by reason and sensibility, we ask the government to:

1. Vigorously go after the masterminds who organized the kidnappings.

2. Establish a special trial court in Metro Manila for kidnapping cases to try the perpetrators and to strictly adhere to the provisions of the Speedy Trial Act. The Supreme Court should designate an appellate division to exclusively dispose of delayed appeals with dispatch.

3. Commit necessary resources to the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force and guarantee the effective implementation of its program of action.

4. Implement the death penalty for convicted kidnappers.

We will support and complement government initiatives to turn the tide against those who violate the law. We believe that order will eventually reign and justice will triumph.

Death is never the answer

By Rodolfo D. Diamante
Executive Secretary
Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCPC) reiterates that the death penalty is an affront to the human dignity of both those on whom it is inflicted and those in whose name it is employed. Killing people is a rejection of God's call to "love one another as I have loved you."

There is no doubt that our society is plagued with criminality of all forms and magnitude. Our government has to show that it is doing something to address this problem.

The death penalty is a convenient escape to hide the fact that our leaders and law enforcers have not really addressed the root as well as the immediate causes of crime.

They must face their inefficiency that has to be covered with committed. And the death penalty makes an effective cosmetic: "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," "crime does not pay," "vengeance is mine" ... all these age-old wisdom we use daily convincing. This is supplemented by new ones: "our society should be given complete of what could happen to would be criminals." And yet, pure and recent studies tell us that the death penalty is not an effective deterrence to the commission of crime.

Insanity

The death penalty is a travesty of justice as in fighting criminality and has become an effective tool for political ends, as in politicians will carry the cause of death for the convicted not because they believe in it as an appropriate national policy, but because it is a popular cause. And yet the popular is not necessarily correct.

The CBCP-CCPC acknowledges the depth and sincerity of our people's concern about the problem of crime. However, as Christians, we are called to uphold and proclaim a set of moral principles and social teachings at the heart of which is the knowledge that the human person is created, the clearest reflection of God among us. Human life is inherently precious and those who commit crimes do not give up their human dignity.

Death penalty is the easy way out of addressing the complex and pervasive problems of criminality. It is not the answer for violent crimes as abortion is for unplanned pregnancies. Death is never the answer.

We appeal to the President not to resort to a quick fix solution to the problem of criminality. We urge our leaders and lawmakers to stop giving us false hope that we will be safe and secure by putting people to death.

SPORTSWATCH

THREE of the 13 foreign participants in the annual "Cesta 7-Cerk International Derby," set for Dec. 1, 2 and 5 at the Cerkle Coliseum, spurred their fighters yesterday during their ride to San Ramon Stella's guesthouse. With Senator Revilla (2nd from left) are Rep. Benjamin Sutton of Saipan and Alabama lawmakers Brian Cowlen and Kim Chappell, the USA Cocker of the Year winners for 2001 and 2002 in Mulvaney Recreation Club in Louisiana.

Antonio reigns supreme in 'Bakbakan'

MANILA "Ian" Antonio posted 10 consecutive victories to emerge as champion in the lightweight division of "National Bakbakan 9 Muay Boriy Championships" (213 entries) recently at the Araneta Coliseum, shortly tagged the coveted title after Singapore MTC Competitor 3000 posted a clear 3-0 (30-26, 30-26, 30-26) split verdict over Jeremy Bautista, but the other popular entry. Singapore Mike Fore, lost it's 2nd fight to emerge runner-up with seven points. The Singapore MTC Competitor 3000 entry entered a combination victory Princeton's crowning Cambodge Shape and Mistress Singapore Lenore Donation. Prime Stage were conditioned underscoring for Singapore Team acting Recommended Position (Finishing Line Compliance 3000 defeats, four time Cooker of the Year awardee, admitted that the event to the toughest to compete when it comes to competition.

Perry paces Nedbank Challenge

SUN CITY, South Africa – Kenny Perry leapt the last on the Gary Player Country Club to take a one-shot lead after the second round Friday in the Nedbank Golf Challenge over the 7,350-yard par 72 course of the Gary Player Country Club. The American fell 52 percent of the fairways to hit GIR to reach halfway in 11-under par 133, one ahead of a charging Sergio Garcia of Spain, who shot the day's best round with a 66. Garcia, who's birdied 11 on the front nine, charting with an eagle on the par-5 No. 10 by chipped from the fringe to within six feet and he went to 10(E) in a playoff against Ernie Els. The three-time champion Els shot a 71 to finish tied at halfway, 14 shots off the pace. AP

Honor for kung fu legend

CHUTEM

MANILA many years as premier teacher of wushu arts, Johnny T. Chutem has taught thousands of students. He has also volunteered his services to many civic endeavors, imparting self-defense skills, health, as well as the ethical philosophy that is the foundation of the Oriental martial arts. In honor, the Wu-Tao Chapter of the JP Rizal High Physical Fraternity will hold a wushu/kung celebration capped by a testimonial dinner at the Bonifacio Hall of Fame, SP Dilman, on Dec. 8. Tentatively tabbed "The Johnny T. Chutem School of Martial Arts Inc. will be announced during the program. Chutem, who has used the tenets of kung fu from a grandfather in China, mastered various Oriental fighting styles. He won the highest grades in karate and aikido and became fully qualified to teach. He is one of the famous Hong Kong school. Chutem, former president of the Karate Association of the Philippines, began teaching in the early 1960s. He is also a 10th degree black belt in Shorin-ryu Shorin-kan Karate-Do for six rounds in the light weight division. The fights were held recently at the state-of-the-art Jose Candela Boxing Arena in Bataan, Taguig. The bouts were on the second pass, is similar 2 p.m. Sunday, as WWII wushu technician Sumisang Electronics Fund., Golf Power Hitters Bat Boxing Semi-final 3 p.m.

Fisterama at Cantada Sports Center

DAVAO CITY Fisterama today features last action packed bouts in the light-flyweight division. Arabella Cadiz fares flying fists on his four-rounder at the Cantada Sports Center. Cadiz, who has a 6-0 win-loss card, had fighting for six rounds in the light-flyweight division. The fights were held recently at the state-of-the-art Jose Candela Boxing Arena in Bataan, Taguig. The bouts were on the second pass, is similar 2 p.m. Sunday, as WWII wushu technician Sumisang Electronics Fund., Golf Power Hitters Bat Boxing Semi-final 3 p.m.

WGAP CUP CHAMPS
PHP64,000-worth Sta. Elena team led by team captain Ric Cu poses the WGAP Cup trophy in club president Edward Tu after winning the recent course-hogging finale. The Sta. Elena ladies beat circuit topnotcher Alabang, Wack Wack and Villamor in the three-week showdown played at the Country Club. Richard and Manila Golf.

CHAMPION SQUAD
Philippine Badminton Association president and former Pres. Lady Arnelita Ramos (standing fourth from left) joins the members of champion team PLDT in the first Manila Badminton Tournament Executive Cup at the Powersmash Badminton Center. Also shown are former PBC commissioner and Sydney Olympian Weena Lim and Herald Philippines officials Lyn Gonzaga and Roddy Mendoza.

Aussie Cuppers up

Woodbridge, pals shine in doubles

MELBOURNE, Australia—Todd Woodbridge and Wayne Arthurs gave Australia a 2-1 lead in the Davis Cup tennis final Saturday, beating Spain's Feliciano Lopez and Alex Corretja, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3, in doubles.

The title will be decided on Sunday when Mark Philippoussis takes on Juan Carlos Ferrero in the first reverse singles, followed by Lleyton Hewitt's match with Carlos Moya.

Hewitt gave Australia a 1-0 lead with a five-set win Friday over Ferrero while Moya beat Philippoussis in four sets to level the first after the first day.

Arthurs and Woodbridge, playing in their ninth Davis Cup match, broke veteran Corretja's serve fourth game of the opening set to go up 3-1. Lopez, playing in his first Davis Cup match, had only played one previous doubles match since 2000.

The Australian pair broke Corretja again in the third game of the second set. At the end of the set, Corretja took an injury timeout to have a sore shoulder worked on by medical officials, but it only delayed the inevitable as Australia took the match easily in just over 80 minutes.

Woodbridge's appearance set a record for matches in the nation's 100-year Davis Cup history. It was Woodbridge's 20th Davis Cup event for Australia, breaking the mark of 20 set by Adrian Quist between 1933 and 1956.

Woodbridge began his Davis Cup career in 1993 for Australia and has a seven-best record of 26-14—20-6 in doubles and 3-4 in singles.

"I was calm and really focused, and I had a lot of confidence in Wayne," Woodbridge said of Saturday's match.

This year, Woodbridge won his 19th doubles title on the ATP tour, equaling Tom Okker of the Netherlands for most career doubles titles since the start of the Open Era in 1968.

On Saturday officials at Rod Laver Arena played the current Spanish national anthem, a day after they played an outdated one that had Spanish officials fuming. AP

WOODBRIDGE (left) and Arthurs celebrate.

Pierce keys Celts win; Malone stars for Lakers

BOSTON—Paul Pierce had 26 points, 10 assists and 13 rebounds for his first triple-double of the season as Boston pair the Milwaukee Bucks, 106-96, Friday night, the first time that season the Celtics have scored 100 or more points.

Nic Batum opponent was last scored 100 or more points this season, and Boston's point total ended the longest season opening streak of a team not being involved in a 100-point game in NBA history at 34.

The longest successful streak is 34 by the Miami Heat, during the 1988-89 season.

Kurt Lathrow led Boston's subs Friday scoring with 14 points. Eric Williams had 13 points and Marcus Banks scored 11 as the Celtics' reserves outscored Milwaukee's 51-34.

Michael Redd led the Bucks with 23 points, and Joe Smith had 11 points and seven rebounds.

In Los Angeles, Karl Malone recorded the fourth triple-double of his 19-year career despite sitting out the fourth quarter, and Devean George had a season-high 19 points as the Lakers routed San Antonio, 103-87.

In his first triple-double since the opening of 1999, the 40-year-old Malone had 10 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in 30 minutes.

Shaquille O'Neal, who set out the previous two games because of a strained muscle in his right calf, had seven points, eight rebounds, seven assists and two blocked shots in 25 minutes.

The win was the fifth straight and seventh in nine games for the Lakers (11-3) and moved them ahead of Sacramento for second place in the Pacific Division, one game behind Dallas. The Lakers handed the Spurs their second loss in 14 games.

Meanwhile, Scott Skiles was named to the new head coach of the Chicago Bulls on Friday.

Complete results
Bkn 21, Boston 32; Milwaukee 30, Detroit 32; Cleveland 30, Indiana 26; Philadelphia 37, Minnesota 28; Memphis 30, Sacramento 27; Orlando 28, Toronto 33; Dallas 30, Houston 25; Seattle 27, Phoenix 32; Utah 32, Portland 30; New Jersey 30, Charlotte 30; Chicago 29, Atlanta 33; San Antonio 87, L.A. Lakers 103; San Antonio 87, L.A. Lakers 103

VANESSA Bryant (right), wife of Kobe Bryant, hugs their daughter Natalia during the Lakers-Spurs game. AP/PHOTO

Primero tops opening leg

By Jane Mariano

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Albert Primero regained the absence of the hands-gunshot national champion to conquer the second phase of the 1st AsCI Pinoy-Primero Cycling Challenge yesterday.

The PLDT/DSL team captain in the Tour Filipina last summer familiarized the 156-kilometer out-and-back course on the way out and rode strategically on the way back to dominate the last leg of the race solo.

Primero finished the course after four hours, one minute and 27.87 seconds, just five seconds ahead of Patrol 117 skipper Bernard Lutsen. Nilo Bolayo wound up third with a clocking of 4:06:29.44.

The riders, without last heroine Amor Quiteria, Mercedes Nuneza, Mesan Tangalin and the rest of the national squad who went to compete in the Vietnam SEA Games this week, will fight for the P40,000-championship purse in the 120km circuit race today within the city.

Joey Bunoz raised the local division to win the P5,000 top prize.

Joe

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

SENATOR Pimentel called him the long distance runner. I call him simply the runner.

He runs to friends when they need him.

He runs to you when you least expect it.

"There are those who would not understand why Joe did what he did," said Senate President of Joe Bergio. "They think that by leaving Malaya and moving to his home, he is effete, that he is not man enough to spit in his face—the face that gave a human dimension to the fight for the freedom of the people and defined the responsibility of citizenship during martial rule."

Joe Bergio had elected to live in San Miguel, Bulacan, after selling his Malaya, the newspaper that helped spark the Edsa Revolt in 1986. It was in a clearing in Joe's Gilmore farm in San Miguel that his tentative seats held out one Saturday afternoon to only a while back.

Senator Pimentel: "What made Joe's act truly admirable is that he left newspapering at the time when his paper would have reached the zenith of its influence because of his personal closeness to the powerbrokers in government. But leave it, he did and went into farming that was, then, a most risky financial proposition."

Joe Bergio loved risks all his life. But they were risks mostly of the kind that weren't enthusiasts.

Joe Bergio was a man on the run in that he loved to run after new ideas in constant pursuit of something new; he was as wont to stone as a recruit in trying to plant away at Clinge (but soon ran out of the urge).

He wrote a flagship column in the business beginning in 1986 about farming, the first and only column in Tagalog then for that appeared in the business; it ran for years after which Joe had allies to it and went to "radio farming," his program hitting the airwaves at the break of dawn. It was a radical departure from Joe's usual that was basically in English as characterized with Pim. In the barrio, Joe's the city became Joe the banger. He suddenly bargained for everything that had something to do with nature, leaving the asphalt jungle peopled by nice disguised as men. Suddenly to him, there was nothing more honorable than embracing nature. Not long after, he gave fed 1 is sample of cats were found lower grass and brownfields in bloom; they have since multiplied like needle-nuns in the rainy season.

But while I had very noble in him is that was just under that he cannot, he still wealthy owner Tina Yap as his court. He'll go out of his way to make the under feel like he "belongs" already. I was one of those he had created as one.

Joe touched my life three times.

First, for quite some time, he sent the love of his brother, Ed. J, the love of my life, had been enjoying edema of dog fleas, Joe's Filipino daily, during the turbulent pre-Edsa 1 years. He changed coed women's rights, giving her position in his newspapers (Pilipinas, Malaya and Mass) to women without hesitation.

Two, Joe never had second thoughts printing a letter addressed to him by my daughter, the now-married Malaya, when Malaya was eight years old. Joe said he used Malaya's letter in his column to Malaya "because your daughter has balls." Malaya cared Joe so gone her letter "unedited" if Joe believed that illness was really a bad president. I had that column framed and consider it near one of my prized possessions.

Three, when several journalists denounced my move to oppose the age-cheating scam in that now infamous Little League scandal, Joe sent me a note "Ignore the hypocrites. Fear no one. For you are surely telling the truth." Reposted Bergio, Joe's nephew who is Bobby's son, handed the newly folded note to me.

Bye, Joe. You will always be my hero till the end of time.

BUTTERBALL Bonifacio M. Ilagan, who finds pleasure in walking more than drinking beer, is celebrating today. The gallant illustrious of UPPAI Secretary Rodriguez will spend the day under the shade of trees traveling in his barong behind a specially painted hot right with his sister's friend-or Kimmyn Wee Arriesar in Quezon City. Many happy returns of the day, Ilagi Boni, and may you have many more birthdays to come. The crusader of Nasty Killing, the 83-year-old mother of painter Jimmy Ibarra, will be laid to rest today in Cubao, Laguna, after a 2 p.m. Mass. Again, my deepest condolences.

Angola rips Nat'ls

From page A19

Campos, who hated his introduction to play in the pro league next year, tallied 15 points to lead the other rookies, including Wolcott's celebrated blemish, Jamie Yap, in the 3-point shootout.

Jamal Vizcarra, son of Rockie Vizcarra, finished second (12 points) while Vina Pilar's Jeff Yap wound up third with 11.

But the day's biggest cats was provided by Rudy Lingad's John Christopher Isaac who displayed Michael Jordan's 80 Classics by coming up with a jaw-dropping one hand off dunk—aka-Vince Carter—to win the slam dunk contest.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Davao airport finished after 11 yrs

DAVAO CITY—Starting Tuesday, air travelers from and to Southern Mindanao would be treated with world-class amenities as the newly finished Davao International Airport (DIA) starts operation.

The DIA, which has been mired in controversy and took almost 11 years to complete, sits on a 204 hectare of land adjacent to the old facility.

President Macapagal-Arroyo jets in on Monday to date for the inauguration of the P5.1 billion state-of-the-art facility that could accommodate about 1.2 million travelers per year.

Ned Parrocha, DIA consultant, said that initially the new airport would cater to 14 domestic flights and five international flights per day.

But the airport's actual capacity is 7.1 aircraft in parking positions and 8.16 aircraft landings per hour.

The new airport's terminal building, which was designed using tropical bahay na kubo motif, is his proud.

The DIA has six major buildings including the control tower, cargo terminal building, fire truck rescue building, control post and maintenance.

The targeted terminal building, which could accommodate more than 1,000 passengers per day, has been fitted with elevators and escalators and has its own seismic-free system.

It also boasts of a clinic, child care and prayer rooms.

In an apparent effort to boost the airport's security following the deadly blast in March that killed more than 20 people, authorities installed black close-circuit TV in major areas like baggage counter, arrival/baggage area, lounges and outside the building.

Four X-ray machines will also be installed in time for the inauguration.

But even with the scheduled opening of the airport, reports about the airport's defects continue to circulate here.

The reports were based on an earlier finding by the DOTC Project Implementation Unit (PIU) that there were cracks in the slabs of the terminal building.

The Steers Airport Consultants (SAC), a group of consultants hired to design and eventually supervise the implementation of the project, found that there were indeed defects in the design of the beams.

The SAC implemented a self-defining mechanism that reinforced the beam loads.

Transportation Assistant Secretary Robert Castaneda said the issue on the airport's structural defects had been resolved.

Castaneda told reporters here that construction crews has been rectified and DOTC experts have already issued the appropriate safety certification. Anthony S. Alfiada, PDI Mindanao Bureau

PUTTING finishing touches on a new airport that took 11 years to build.

Bulacan gov answers raps

DESCRIBING the graft charges filed against him by some government group before the Office of the Ombudsman as "frustrated and absurd," Bulacan Gov. Josefina "Josie" dela Cruz yesterday expressed confidence that the government's anti-graft body will eventually clear her.

"It is unfortunate that in their desperate attempt to discredit my administration and even my family, some politicians and vested interest groups have resorted to a ... demolition job against me," Dela Cruz said in a press statement.

She also disputed claims made by lawyer Democrito Mendez, head of the so-called Bantay ng Ilog Bulakenyo (an anti-Mabalacat Diversion Road group), that there was an irregularity in the purchase of 63 vehicles from the Honorary Motor Assn. of Bulacan Corp.

"This Bagong NGO is nothing but a group of individuals with obnoxious political agenda bent on destroying me," she said.

Dela Cruz also said Bantay ng Ilog is tried to falsify documents and lied statistics and strong information about an to discredit her administration.

Provincial records showed that from January to December this year, only 29 vehicles were bought by the province. Of these, 26 were given to the Philippine National Police, two were ambulances and 11 were assigned to the different departments of the province.

Dela Cruz said her brother, Josefino Mendoza, had divested himself of shares in Honorary since Sept. 25, 2000.

2 shootings prompt joint investigation

ORMALUTE CITY—The Commission on Human Rights and the Negros Occidental Provincial Prosecutor's Office will jointly investigate the recent shootings in Mabinay, seven miles (11 km) north, east of here, amid suspicion that people close to a police officer had a hand in the killings of at least two persons, including a barangay captain.

Provincial Attorney Evelio Vergara said they would conduct the inquiry on the request of the relatives of Jesus Baldado, the city's village chief of Barangay Bagacay Baldado, some residents and officials of the town.

Baldado was killed by a single shot in the head on Nov. 10.

Quoting witnesses, Vergara said a week before Baldado's shooting, the barangay captain detained a person connected a police officer in Mabinay for carrying a firearm without a permit.

The name of that person and the police officer is withheld pending investigations.

Earlier, a gunman who many residents identified a suspected thief in broad daylight at the public market of Mabinay.

Vergara, who hails from Mabinay, said many residents in the town are now very concerned with the peace and order situation in the area.

Mabinay police Chief Senior Insp. Pedrito Gicaraan the shootings in Mabinay could possibly be a result of some people getting back with vengeance preying summoned evildoers in the town.

On the killing of Baldado, Gicaro said the police have already identified a suspect, adding that personal grudge could be the motive for the killing. Rony Amorado, PDI Negros Bureau

Club Marinduqueño

THE CLUB Marinduqueño Inc. will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a social gathering and fund-raising activity at 7 p.m., Dec. 4 at the Black Whale Grill and Country Club in Mandaluyong City. The group is a civic organization of professionals and successful natives of Marinduque that helps less fortunate Marinduqueños, according to its president, Capt. Emmanuel Pepito. For details contact Sandy Villanueva 7356631; Dr. Leo Gonzales, 8924806; and Nestor Severino, 3307208. PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Tribal community relents, OKs mine exploration on its land

DAPNISEG, South Cotabato — A tribal community strongly opposing any mining activity in its ancestral domain finally softened and allowed the Tampakan Mineral Resources Corporation (TMRC) to conduct mining exploration in the boundaries of the provinces of South Cotabato, Sarangani, Davao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat.

Antonio Mokid, tribal chieftain and chair of the Salnawng Tribal Council, told the Inquirer: "It was the people's decision to allow TMRC to conduct exploration activities in the area."

The Salnawng Tribal Council was the only tribal council of seven to refuse to sign any agreement with the Western Mining Company on ancestral domain rights.

WMC was the original holder of the Financial Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) covering some 100,000 of hectares land in the area.

The council has allied itself with the Justice and Peace Desk (JPIC) of the Diocese of Kidapawan with the Western Mining Company as the entry of any mining firm in the area.

Later, its staunch opposition over WMC ceased.

Mokid said he already informed Sr. Soana Bellatrix, executive director of the JPIC, regarding the council's decision to allow TMRC to join venture of a local firm and Subpiril, another Australian mining company, to conduct mining exploration in the area.

The mining site is right in the heart of the B'laan's ancestral domain and is covered by a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) issued by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

The members of the Salnawng Tribal Council led the officials of TMRC led by Tony Al Robles signed the preliminary agreement on Wednesday afternoon in Barangay Datal Blao in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat.

Also present during the signing were other tribal leaders, NGO officials, Women and Socio-economic Bureau officials and representatives from the local government of Columbio.

By signing the agreement, the Salnawng Tribal Council will get about P1.5 million in annual development assistance from the TMRC.

The amount will be used for livelihood projects, education and other development projects aimed at alleviating the plight of tribal residents in the project area.

Both parties said they expect only some spouts a final agreement before the end of next month.

Mayen Mokid, the oldest tribal leader in the area, asked the TMRC to respect the customs and traditions of the B'laans in the area. Aquilino F. Pimentel, PIA Mindanao Bureau

BENIGUET SORTIE

Opposition Sen. Team Aquino Oreta is welcomed to the Benguet State University by school president Rogelio Colting. The senator was at the university recently to win support for a bill she filed making a P1.8-billion start-up fund to upgrade the computer skills of students and teachers.

STRONG EVIDENCE

Ecleo bid for bail junked

By Suzanne Sabio
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Any hope by his family and followers that cult leader Rufino Eclea Jr. would be able to spend Christmas with them this year was dashed Friday when the court denied his petition for bail.

Cebu Regional Trial Court Judge Generoso Labra said the prosecution's evidence against Eclea was strong.

Eclea faces parricide charges for the slaying of his wife Anita Bacoled before presumably on Jan. 5, 2002, the day she disappeared.

The decomposing body of Anita, 27, was found a month to get large bag that was dumped in Barangay Cota, Dalaguete town, some 65 km south of Cebu City, on Jan. 8, 2002. Her family reported her missing on Jan. 6.

Antique reports showed Anita died of strangulation.

The judge said that while there were no eyewitnesses to the killing of Anita, the prosecution was able to present circumstantial evidence that showed Eclea could have killed his wife.

But Labra said for ruling on Eclea's petition for bail could in no way be interpreted that Eclea was already guilty of murdering his wife.

"It's too early to say that. Eclea's guilt could not be determined now," he said since the defense has yet to present its evidence.

Today, the "supreme master" of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA), has denied the charges.

Labra's board on prosecution witnesses, including Anita's brother, who testified seeing the couple fight on the day she disappeared.

"The testimony of prosecution witnesses are entitled to full faith and credit as they have no motive to falsely testify against the accused," Labra said.

Lawyer Orlando Bahinting Jr., one of Eclea's defense counsels, said he was surprised by the decision because he believed the defense team had "successfully disproved" the witnesses' testimony.

Bahinting said he and his co-counsel, Clement Mata, and Agnani Rep. Claudio Kibes, Eclea's mentor, were planning to file a motion for reconsideration and would go to the Court of Appeals if this was denied.

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Information

AUCTION: Dec 4, 10 am, Miraluna Inc., Bldg 14, Carmelia Industrial Complex, Bo. Bancal, Carmona, Cavite. Inspect: Dec 2 & 3, 9 to 4. Contact: Ronnie Angeles in Philippines, 0917.415.7915. Email: delasis@robin.com

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DOT fetes Pacquiao

BOXING champion Manny Pacquiao will get another honor when the Visit Sports Tourism and Travel Advertisers show brings down its curtains in colorful ceremonies today at the Glorietta 2 in Ermita/Manila.

Department of Tourism Sec. Richard Gordon will hand over a special prize to the country's sports hero in the 4:30 p.m. affair for glowing the Philippines in the world map with his recent ring exploits.

Pacquiao's reward will be a "tourist recognition observance" for himself and his family, which Sports Tourism director Cynthia Guerrero said "will be an experience they will never forget."

"Pacquiao's was the triumph of all Filipinos. He is for a big boost to our tourism industry," added the head of the Philippine Convention and Travel Corp., the DOT's marketing arm, which set up the trade fair.

Serving as the appetizer to the event is a Celebrity Billiards match at 4 p.m. pitting Pacquiao against another world-class athlete in Efren "Bata" Reyes, and Secretary Gordon.

Also elected in his exclusive list to grace the occasion is Local Government Sec. Jose Lina, Senator-turned-action Robert Jaworski Jr., Rep. Jesse Robredo-Manocor and Philippine Olympic Committee president Cesar Zapata.

The Manila Sports Council headed by Ali Atienza is hosting a sports celebrities and fans gathering from 3–4 p.m. serving as a prelude to the closing ceremonies.

ASIAN SOFTBALL

Blu Boys clobber Iranians

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE RP Blu Boys scored an abbreviated 7-0 victory over Iran yesterday for a smashing debut in the 7th Asian men's softball championship at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

Taking advantage of the Iranians' slow pitcher, Mark Eric Ramirez highlighted the lopsided win by slamming a two-run homer in the bottom of the third that also scored Apolonio Rosales.

Two innings later, Ramirez again scored the game-clinching run off a throwing error for the country's seventh win that shortened the game to just five innings due to the new set of mercy rules imposed by the world governing body of softball.

But Blu Boys' coach Reynaldo Manansala wasn't swayed with what he saw, saying his pupils could have finished the game in the third inning where, according to the new rules, a game is won by the team which leads by 15 runs after the third.

"I think we were very surprised because we know Iran is just starting to play the game but we didn't expect them to play that bad," said Manansala in Filipino.

The Iranians, who flew here to gain experience and gain a foothold in softball in the Middle East, relied on just one pitcher in lanky Mad[illegible] Samari.

"When I leave the ground, I know we'll win," said Manansala.

Initial hope on knocking down faith, practically serving it to the eager Filipino batters who are gunning to avenge the defeat they suffered from the Japanese when the latest was last held here in 1997.

In contrast, the Blu Boys paraded three fresh set of pitchers in Roger Bajan, Leah Dela Cruz and Horacio Reina.

Bajan, the best pitcher in the team, only threw 16 pitches, all of them in the first inning, before Manansala fielded in the other pitchers, who didn't allow so single hit.

Earlier, Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei defeated Indonesia and India, respectively, to post their first victories in the six-nation tourney.

Defending champion Japan also took the floor on its opening of Thailand, 20-0, in the fourth inning later to the night.

The Japanese posted a 4-0 lead in the first inning as see the nine for the win.

54th Fil-Am golfest gets under way tomorrow

BAGUIO City hosts more than a thousand golfers coming from various parts of the country and the world for the 54th edition of the Fil-Am Golf Invitational beginning tomorrow.

The lodging team of the Baguio Country Club and the Manor of the Camp John Hay Golf Club, as well as the big hotels, are all fully booked due to the big number of entries spread out into 147 teams of five players each excluding team officials and even their families.

The big golf party in Baguio explodes two days from now with 74 teams competing in the FI division and another 73 squads clamoring it out for the A division titles. Each division is made up of the Championship, A, B, C, D, E and F classes.

The hitting of ceremonial tee-shots yesterday ushered in the six-day competition backed by Smart Communications Inc. as presenter and Northwest Airlines and Royal Caribbean International as major sponsors.

Doing the honors were Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan, City Mayor Bernardo Vergara, Benguet Gov. Raul Molintas, BCC president Federico Aguinaldo, CDA chairman Robert Soliongco Jr., Royal Caribbean International's Alex Yapinchay and Anatomia "Nap" Martires of Smart Communications Inc.

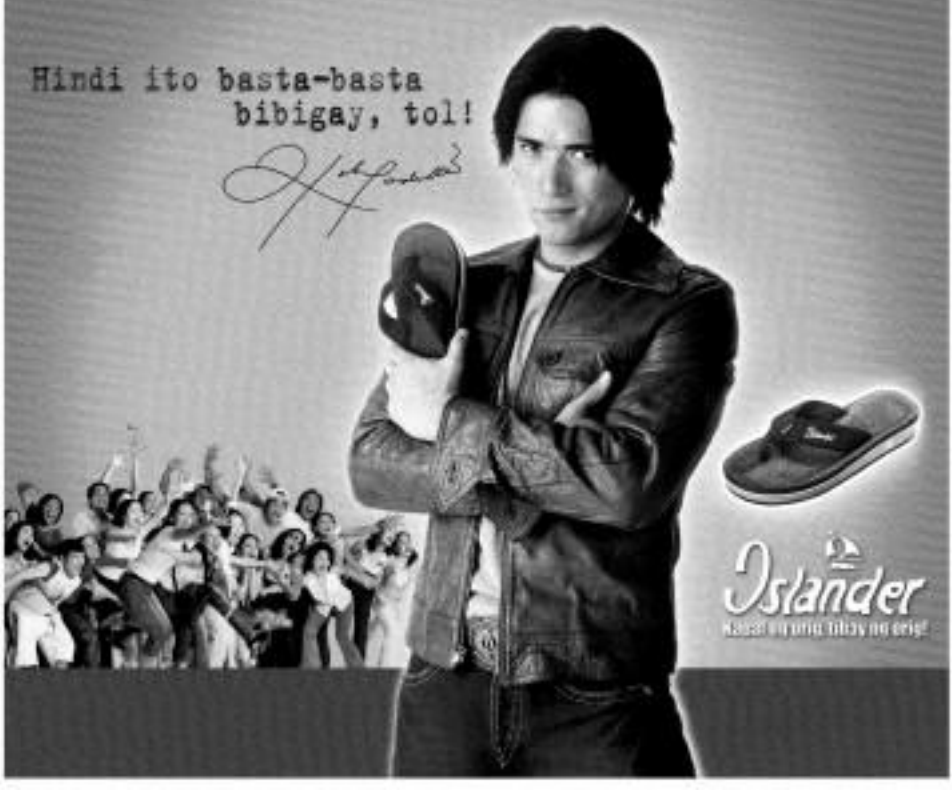
Jong Avasco

Seniors' tourney slated Dec. 10

THE FEDERATION of Golf Clubs Phils. Inc. will stage the Senior Care Fellowship Golf Classic on Wednesday, Dec. 10, at the Legends course of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club.

A total of 144 members of the Federation's Senior Care Program will be depositing the low net and low gross titles as well as the top three places in four handicap divisions and the ladies category.

Interested parties may call 840-3911 or 838-2222. Look for Pie.



INQUIRER Mindanao

E-mail to provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Nimfa S. Ahmadan

Trying to destroy the wall of hatred

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Philippine Daily Inquirer

HATRED. Distrust. Disgust.

These are just some of the words written on the wall that is virtually dividing the Muslim and Christian residents of Mindanao.

This wall is getting stronger every time armed conflicts erupt in Mindanao.

And the way to Pilot Kenth Cardenas and Bing-ambalan last February added more power to the strength that the wall holds.

Sir Balay, a non-government organization whose primary goal is to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance to victims of human rights violations, drew it as urgent need to break the wall that divides the Muslims and Christians.

And the effort must start from the childhood conflict zone where Balay called "warriors."

Balay which means shelter in many Philippine dialects, is an institution that offers psycho-social healing although with communal survivors of internal displacements, political detainees and other human rights violations.

Joy Lascuna, Balay national officer for youth and children development, said the wars in Mindanao, which started during the Spanish occupation in the country, left the people many wounds that are still unhealed.

Believing that breaking the wall between the Muslims and Christians must start from the children, Balay conducted a youth camp here last month where the children, all of them from conflict affected areas, were given the chance to air their ideas about peace and conflict and how they can help in the search for peace in Mindanao.

The peace camp, done in two installments, was themed "Youth coming of age for peace."

Participants were from the regions Tabuan, Dinkoguian and Pantiquian, all in PIKit and in Layog in Magpetchanan.

"We believe that war is a vicious cycle and it can't be denied that there is hatred between Muslims and Christians. And this is a good start to shatter established biases and prejudices with this group because they are the next generation," Lascuna said.

Fr. Roberto Layson, inter-religious dialogue coordinator of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate Congregation, gave the participants the timeline of conflict in Mindanao which led to the day the Spaniards attempted to conquer Mindanao.

"Young Muslims and Christians, and in digenous peoples are experiencing communal hate experience. My lecture was meant to enable them to understand that the conflict is this... dumas is not between religions," Layson said.

Fr. Spaniards, Layson said, pissed on the people of Mindanao during their occupation which was actually the start of a chronic relationship between them.

"Recognizing among who says as if we were going to conflict. Whatever I have done the history, the children were able to understand the roots of the conflict in Mindanao ... that the conflict here was just an invention of the colonizers," Layson said.

"The same also happened during the time of the Americans and until now. The wall that divides the people in Mindanao is not actually in terms of religious differences," Layson added.

Layson said he left the participants with a challenge to write a history of Mindanao according to what the children realized and what they believe it should be... a history that is not dictated by the colonizers.

One of the realizations the children had, Layson said, was that the Muslim-Christian rift should end with them.

SOME of the participants in the youth camp organized by Balay

Gov't loses hold of 'halal' trademark in high court ruling

By Nash B. Madtes
Cotabato City

THE GOVERNMENT has lost its hold on the "halal" trademark, following a Supreme Court ruling that nullifies the Executive Order mandating its technical intervention on products permissible to Muslims.

In the lukewood country story can high, the high court silently ruled on July 30 as "null and void" President Macapagal Arroyo's Executive Order No. 46, which tasked the Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA) with issuing certification on and helping determine the authenticity of halal products to and from domestic producers and foreign markets.

Citing the doctrine of the separation of church and state, a petition by the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines (IDCP) said "only the Muslims can determine what is lawful and allowed to them by their religion and not the government."

Technical aspect

And since the Supreme Court ruling dealt on "only on the "religious aspect" of halal food and not food preparation, OMA said the government should continue to oversee the "technical aspect" of the certification on halal products.

OMA Undersecretary Sani Zamzamin Ampatuan pointed out that the IDCP does not have the institutional capability and expertise to undertake the technical aspect of halal certification for domestic and foreign consumers.

"The subject of the dispute that is now dividing government policymakers is whether the preparation and subsequent certification of halal products should be entrusted as purely religious responsibility for the Muslim sector, or should it undertake as a value-added task for concerned government offices," Ampatuan said.

Export potential

Halal products preparation isn't quite parochial.

In fact, it commands strong economic potential as it evidence in many diplomacy treaty treaties and business commitments signed in a number of product market matching sessions among trade and industry representatives of the Brunei Indonesia Malaysia Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).

Of the four-member nations, Brunei posts the highest export supply level of halal meat, having the most sophisticated and elaborate slaughter house and cold-storage stands in the region.

Brunei business groups once proposed a production tour of Maguindanao's idle lands for pasture development to sustain massive goat and cattle raising for halal meat exporting overseas to the Middle East, Europe and America.

But local sectors could hardly muster quality breeding being the trader's domestic (grower's) counterpart in what could have been a fruitful joint venture.

Halal meat are also produced in many sophisticated ways by canned corned beef in England and in noodles in China.

Collaborative efforts

Ampatuan said collaborative efforts for the technical aspect of the certification were reserved between the IDCP as a private civil society group and the government, particularly through the National Meat Inspection Commission of the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Food and Drugs of the Department of Health.

He cited that halal meat preparation does not stand solely on the sheet prayer read by the slaughterer, but more particularly on the well-bare of the animal and on the aspect that how effin the executioners, like meatcutters or cleavers. "Essentially do so requires the use of modern and sophisticated equipment and laboratory tests," he said.

Among others added Ampatuan, EO 46 mandated OMA to forge close working coordinations with the two government agencies, and help institutionalize domestic halal production and of determining its authenticity for local and foreign markets or consumers.

Basically, qualities define halal as anything (food and non-food) free of any prohibitions by sacred standards (as in one's means of living), is physically and socially beneficial when practiced, a prerequisite or constituting part of a religious belief, and something permissible, lawful, allowed or legal.

The Islamic halal tradition lays some restrictive rules that uphold more societal concerns than religious, such as animal welfare and consumer protection, by ensuring humane treatment of the beasts at slaughtering and ensuring sanitation and disease prevention in the process, explained Ampatuan.

A national convention on halal food and non-food products preparations will be held on Dec. 7 at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City, the OMA said.

Sharpened blade

For animal slaughtering, it prescribes a swift-cleansing blade to lessen its suffering, and just a two-minute of prayer (that the life takes) says to it, being the only religious aspect of the meat preparation, temperate mood.

EVEREADY

WARNING ON FAKE EVEREADY BATTERIES

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

On October 3, 2003, as teams from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) swooped down on separate establishments in Manila suspected of distributing Size "AA" Batteries infringing on the EVEREADY™ Cat and 9™ trademarks. At 7:00 p.m., the CIDG operatives served search warrants on 1) warehouse allegedly owned or operated by one Johnson Chan, located in Binondo, and 2) warehouse storerooms allegedly owned or operated by one Tony Chua, in Tondo, all in Manila City. The CIDG also served search warrants on two establishments, namely WORLD OF ACCESSORIES in Tondo, and FASHION GEAR BAZAAR in San Nicolas, Manila. The foregoing strike was followed by mopping up operations on October 8, 2003, where the CIDG seized batteries infringing on the Eveready™ and CAT and 9™ marks from ECOSEN BAZAAR (in Binondo), FUNDIDOR GENERAL MERCHANDISE (in Binondo), HONEST TO GOODNESS TRADING (in Binondo), and CODENAME GENERAL MERCHANDISE (in San Nicolas) all in the City of Manila.

All told, CIDG operatives seized approximately 500,000 pieces of infringing batteries. Energizer Philippines, Inc. is now preparing the necessary criminal and civil complaint charges against the said establishments. If convicted, the parties may be subject to penalties of up to five (5) years imprisonment plus fine.

Energizer Philippines, Inc. hereby warns all other establishments selling or distributing products infringing the Eveready™ trademark and Cat and 9™ design that it will not hesitate to bear down the full weight of the law on any party, individual or establishment engaged in the traffic of fake products.

PLAFON MARTINEZ FLORES
SAN PEDRO & LEARIO
Counsel for Energizer Philippines, Inc.
4F Tuason Bldg.,
114 Ramona Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City

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Economy takes ...

(Continued from A1)

by promising the undefined platforms as the means themselves, they would contribute to creating the wave(s) that their rallies were intelligently (rather than on mere whims)

Like Mr. Macapagal, the platforms the other presidential candidates promised were intended more to address the problems of "narrating lawlessness and corruption, (Montes) stories on Page A23.

The fact(sheet), however, is, (correct) their strongest opponent for former Education Secretary Raul Roco's plan to eradicate corruption in his arms and to live. Thanks Lacson's arm is crack down on drug dealing and rising criminality.

Aaron read Fernando Poe Jr. did not touch on specific issues in his speech which was read for him by Sen. Nicanor Jesús II. Poe begged off from personally presenting his platforms as he was indisposed.

Addressing the businessmen, Roco said he is running for president in next year's elections on the "Agenda of GOD."

GOOD, he said, stands for "Good governments. Opportunity for all and special privileges for none; Peace, productivity and prosperity; and Education and information for sustainable development."

A former education secretary Roco pledged to enforce the law that guarantees free education in the primary and high school levels.

"Preparing himself on the subject in the increasing involvement in the society, Lacson somewhat warned, if elected president, to eliminate organized crime and restore "justice, law and order" in the first 100 days of his presidency.

Through a PowerPoint presentation, Lacson disclosed his vision of government and political platform—restore justice, law and order; stop corruption through lead, credibility by example; increase national wealth; upgrade education; business-friendly and pro-durable economic policies; strengthen the federal system; and a national health policy to make quality health affordable.

Poe's agenda disappointed the businessmen who had wanted to hear about the popular actor's platform of government. (See box at right.)

Fernando Poe Jr. was not there to address the problems of "narrating lawlessness and corruption, (Montes) stories on Page A23.

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FPJ down with flu, or was it stage fright?

By Gil Cabunoy Jr.

FERNANDO Poe Jr. may have died in the spotlight almost all his life, but yesterday he appeared to have been stricken by a bad case of stage fright.

A feared listless backbencher in the last session and foreign before public speaking engagements since he announced Wednesday that he would be in the running in the 2004 presidential election.

The no-show disappointed some of his fans who, eager to see how "Da King" would fare in his political debut, stopped to the forum sponsored by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) at the Manila Hotel.

His speech, which he supposedly must himself and which was read by his spokesperson, Sen. Nicanor Jesús II, failed to confirm the business community's apprehensions about him.

Some read Poe's speech to an audience but that, half the size of the one that ran through the presentations of the other presidential contenders, former Sen. Raul Roco and Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Most of the listeners appeared bored while Some was reading and, later, perusing the panel of businessmen's questions on Poe's qualifications, the economy, and peace and order.

PCCI officials said Poe had confirmed his attendance at the forum, but in lunchtime he supposedly may want that he had come down with the flu, which made his talk voice even more inaudible.

The organizers agreed to let Some read Poe's speech and answer questions from the panel.

NO-SHOW: "Da King" disappointed fans when he didn't show up for his first public speaking engagement. EDGAR SALADO

Some said PCCI officials of Poe's office to come down out to dinner to make up for his absence.

Simple plan

The PCCI members' response was strong.

In his speech, Poe claimed that he was still "first running" his general plans and programs (search on issues/matters) and various sectors.

He said he had only a simple goal and a simple plan for the country, to help uplift the nation and run the government in economic assistance and in right suspension with all concerned sectors.

"I believe that a capital can be run by just one man because he led his men," he said, adding, "I need you to tell me, the Filipino, who I'm here to serve, what can I do for you? I need the business sector to tell me how we can improve and strengthen the business climate of the Philippines. I need the political sector to tell me how we can make the task of governance work for the people. I need labor to tell me what needs they have. I need the Armed Forces and the police to tell me what are necessary needs to preserve peace and order in our cities and in our streets. I need our foreign friends to tell me how we, as a Filipino nation, can be worthy allies of world peace and prosperity."

TEAM

He promised to put into action whatever he learned from his consultations.

"But I cannot do this alone; the government cannot do this alone," he said. "We must be a TEAM—Together Each Achieves More."

His formula for economic development appeared to be riding himself the basic needs of the Filipino people to peace and order, which then results in higher foreign investments.

"Experts, we can make all good things happen," he said. "So I always tell my secretary and staff, no use put together all the essential components that makes a blockbuster, "It is not what I like but what is right."

Some said they're lack of political experience and his show his name never seems rather than his ability for a president.

He said that as a political greenhorn, he would be short sure on advice from other political gurus such as current Pres. Joseph Estrada.

Some who said that show business was also a business, just like Poe succeed in managing his film outfit through the years when a number of big studios were belly up.

METRO

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3 free schools for Marikina poor

By Leiga del Puerto

NORBERT Subido's day job as a barangay kagawad (community councilor) earns him P6,000.

With the money he earns—considered a lot of love, patience and the occasional donation—he gets to run three daycare centers for poor preschool children in Marikina City.

For four years, Subido, 38, has been teaching preschoolers for free—for them not collect tuition and other fees.

Subido, a bachelor and the head of his barangay's education committee, does not get a centavo for what he does.

In fact, he has to dig into his own pocket to keep the schools running.

His parents help out by paying for the electricity.

A house unlike any other

In Subido's house at 15 Bonnet Street, 166 Village, Concepcion Dos, Marikina, there are small desks and tables, colorful ABC charts, a blackboard and photocopies of reading materials.

Every morning from Monday to Thursday, children aged 4 to 6, in pink and blue uniforms, form a neat line in front of his house.

Children who come in before their scheduled classes get to mix with their parents under the shade of Batuhan trees in front of the house.

Subido, a computer science graduate of the University of Rizal System, said the kids' tuition has to carry on with the program.

In the Top 10

"Some of my former students are now among the top 10 in private and public schools," he said. "I'm so proud of what they have achieved. These kids inspire me to go on."

Subido's mother Soledad, 66, said that she is very proud that he has given so much to help other people.

But the pride goes way to longlong, when the youthful that her son barely has time for himself.

No time to look for a mate

"He doesn't even have time to find a wife," she said. "He wakes up at 6 a.m. to prepare for the day. His classes starts at 8 to the morning and ends at 9 at night. After that, it's to the church and the barangay."

Subido started the project shortly after a typhoon hit the country in September 1999.

During a relief operation, he chanced upon poor kids in a depressed area and realized how they were deprived of so many things—especially access to basic education.

A few days later, Subido began teaching around 50 kids in a vacant lot on Pinagsibaan Street.

By 2000, the councilor opened two more schools—one in a chapel at Sapa corner Ilang-Ilang Street and another two rooms at Sumange Street.

Graduation rites are held at the grounds of the larger 555 Village Elementary School.

As the enrollment swelled, Subido sought permission from his barangay to open another school right inside their house.

Where they used yes, he turned their garage into a classroom.

Parents of children that go to his school have reported considerable improvements in the reading and reading abilities of their kids.

108 students

"My four-year-old son, Ronald, can already write his name and read the alphabet," said Gina Ortuza, 36.

The boy started schooling last June.

"We can't afford a pre-school admission for our child," said Sieva Estabaya, who has a four-year-old son in Subido's class. "He read letters the councilor to thank for."

To date, the Peter Pan Care Learning Center Project has 108 students, aged three and above, majority of whom come from poor families.

Far from ideal

Subido maintains three schools—his home, the Sto. Cristo Village and the Pinagsibaan Street—which the Department of Social Welfare and Development has recognized.

But the condition of the schools are far from ideal. The roofs leak when it rains, and the classrooms get unbearably hot when the sun goes up.

Sometimes are not steady. Subido's Christmas wish is that the students—especially those in the depressed areas—could have gifts to exchange with others they hold a Christmas party some time next month.

"If you have something to spare, we would appreciate it very much," Subido said.

MARIKINA Councilor Norman Subido, seventh preschool teacher and daycare center operator, is at home teaching the children of poor families for free. PHOTO BY GRIMM MAZ

SUBSIDY and his wards outside his house that doubles as a school

2 PDEA men in shooting of NBI agent surrender

By Leila Salaverria and Leiga del Puerto

TWO AGENTS of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency who admitted shooting a National Bureau of Investigation agent in Marikina on Monday have surrendered to the police.

The men—PO2 Jhevnie Bulan and PO1 Kristian Jones—surrendered to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

They admitted in a report that they shot NBI rookie agent Marvin Marcelo, a member of the bureau's Intelligence Special Operations Division.

PDEA director Anselmo Avenido notified the NBI about the surrender.

Marcelo sustained several gunshot wounds on the body but is now out of danger and is recuperating in undisclosed hospital. He will be made to verify if the two suspects were indeed the ones who shot him.

According to an investigator privy to the case, the PDEA agents claimed they were forced to shoot Marcelo because the NBI agent had tried to grab their guns. The suspects added that only the two of them were involved in the shooting incident.

However, some witnesses claimed that up to five people were involved in the shooting incident.

That Monday night, four men claiming to be PDEA agents shot and wounded Marcelo on Sumulong Highway in Barangay Santo Niño, Marikina.

Witnesses had alighted from an SUV van to complain to a Metro Manila Development Authority enforcer that the SUV driver had badmouthed him.

While on the way to an MMDA outpost, the suspects stopped them in an apparent attempt to block the MMDA driver but sped away.

The police said the suspects appeared drunk. They had come from a nearby pub where they had ordered beer and music host.

However, witnesses told NBI agents that there were five PDEA agents at the scene of the shooting. Three of them confronted Marcelo, while the two others stayed in a white Toyota Revo (XPR 686).

KRISHNA Louisiana

He needs help

CHILDREN OLD Krishna Lorraine Sto. Camilo Ebarate, a rare condition where the bile ducts of the liver are unable to conduct bile out of the organ. As a result, the boy's liver is slowly dying. The boy needs a liver transplant abroad. Cost of the operation is P3 million.

Her parents, Arleen and Rolando, are appealing to kind-hearted readers for help.

Donations may be sent to 10-206 account under the name Arleen Ocampo ITF Krishna Lorraine. (Account No. 1071-0021-50) 10-206 Caminito Branch, Las Piñas, or BPI account under James Jardine ITF Krishna Lorraine. (Account no. 0009-5553-34) BPI Bicutan, Laguna branch. (and line number is 8322-9864/0205, cell phone: 0919) 260-7870. You may also call Dr. Giovanna V. Cerqueña at (02) 723-1410.

Rallies, traffic rerouting mark Bonifacio day

By Tina Santos and Marvin P. Marfil

PROTEST rallies to be staged by workers and the urban poor will mark today's observance of the 140th birthday of the Great Plebian, Andres Bonifacio.

The owner of activities will be in Caloocan City, where the commemorative "Historical Walk" will also be inaugurated by Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo.

The three-mile walk "Historical Walk" is located right in the middle of Edsa, some 100 meters away from the base of the 72-year-old Bonifacio Monument in Caloocan City.

"Traffic officials have also drawn up a re-routing scheme to avoid massive congestion in the area during the celebration which starts at 5 p.m.

The program in Caloocan, which will be attended by city officials, city hall employees, students and other community organizations, will be preceded by a military-civic parade.

Fireworks display and a ringing dance courtesy of the local Ormoc community will also be featured during the celebration.

Commissioner on Elections chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., Southern NCR director Reynaldo Cleto representing Southern Secretary Richard Gordon and NBI director Ludovico Badoy will be the guests of honor.

Vice President Teofisto Guingona will participate in the Li wreath-laying Bonifacio event which will be held at the monument's base, wreath-laying and a cultural program.

The same venue will be attended by about 3,000 members of the militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and the Kilusang Mayo Uno.

From Liwasan, the militant groups will proceed to Mendiola to hold rallies and to continue their protest action.

Another group of workers, this time led by Pamalakaya Mangagawa and its allied groups, will march from Espana to Malacañang, PM Rep. Renato Magtubo will lead the rally.

Aside from Metro Manila, the militants said other rallies will be held in Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Iloilo, Bicol, Bataan, Cavite City and parts of the Visayas region.

BuCor officials, Las Piñas cops avert clash over demolition

A LONG-STANDING land dispute between the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) in Muntinlupa City and the Las Piñas City government has led to the controversial demolition of around 24 houses standing on BuCor property to give way to a road widening project of the city.

According to BuCor Supt. Francisco Remanes, the demolition team comprised of members of the Las Piñas police and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) last Thursday could not show BuCor officials any court order or documents backing their operation.

Alvendia said without warning, the wrecking crew came to around 10 a.m. and "flatly demolished" all the government quarters in Camp Sampaguita that were owned by BuCor personnel and their relatives.

"It was a swift action and everybody was caught unaware," Alvendia said in a statement to the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

He also stressed that the team did not properly coordinate with the BuCor administration.

"Our office was informed by the affected employees only after their residences were demolished," Alvendia said, adding that the team did not even ask BuCor officials to inform their own personnel about the impending demolition.

Following the incident, Mitsuoka said the bureau has filed on which the houses were built belonged to BuCor.

The incident prompted the Bureau officials and personnel led by Mitsuoka to stand guard at the area for the next days Tuesday.

Senior Supt. Rolando Pineda, Las Piñas police chief, however maintained that the land was part of Las Piñas and not Muntinlupa.

Station and Department of Public Works and Highways engineers defined the boundary of Muntinlupa and Las Piñas long ago," Pineda said the business over the phone.

Pineda said that the BuCor employees and some civilians illegalized the matter which defined the boundary where they began building their "shanties" on the site.

Pineda added that they had to demolish the houses with the help of the MMDA to give way to a road project which would connect the cities of Las Piñas and Muntinlupa to Cavite.

The police chief said the government has committed to repaying and convincing the owners of nine of the 24 demolished houses to rebuild.

He said that the other remaining structures have refused to budge and, instead, are each asking P1 million.

"We had to do what's right for everyone," Pineda said, adding that the road project's deadline is on Dec. 15.

Pineda, however, admitted that they were not able to coordinate with the BuCor administration.

"I've already apologized to Gen. Santiago for the oversight," Pineda said. Penny Quiroz, Nestor Burgos, Beverly Torralba and Margaux Ortiz

Ban sounds death toll for Pasay Road bars

By Margaux Ortiz

NOT EVERYBODY is happy about the implementation of the smoking ban in Makati City.

Owners and personnel of restaurants and bars on Pasay Road are complaining that they have been losing business because customers who used to frequent their establishments now go to other cities where there is no ban on smoking.

Roland de Guzman, operations manager of Jeje bar and restaurant on Pasay Road, said that when they opened Jeje in October last year, the place was a hit. People flocked to the spacious bar and restaurant as its six floors had what I have a good time, according to De Guzman.

Luck changed

"We were filled up even during weekdays ... on four days. [Next month] will be half full," De Guzman said in Filipino.

But all that changed when the city government implemented the no-smoking ordinance last July, De Guzman said.

"Suddenly our bars changed, people stopped going to our bar the moment we informed them, they could not smoke inside," he said.

De Guzman said they consequently had to cut down on operations—they now stopped hiring hands to save on costs.

Bad for business

Jeje closed down this month—a year after it opened.

De Guzman said Jeje was not the only bar and restaurant affected by the city's no-smoking ordinance.

A snack example is Cable Car, which once attracted even more customers than Pepe-Ala, De Guzman said.

Thomas Webb, Cable Car's consultant, said that since the ban was implemented, the establishment has almost half of their regular customers, "on top of the normal downturn of business because of the country's flailing economy."

Poorly timed

"We don't know how long we could stay in business," Webb said.

Cable Car used to operate 24 hours a day, but Webb said that they had to cut down on hours, as they changed their operation schedule. They are now open from 4 p.m. to 4 a.m.

Webb stressed that the smoking ban was poorly timed because of the situation in the country. He also thought it was poorly worked out because some establishments have a "natural advantage over the others."

Restaurants and bars in Greenbelt, for example, have plenty of space outside, where people can go if they want to smoke, Webb said.

Risk of closure

"We also think that the ban is not equally enforced ... in Makati," Webb said. "People would of course run to Metropolitan, Quezon City and Manila, where they have more freedom."

Cecilia Montserrat, caretaker of Boracay Juice Bar just beside Jeje, said they had to close down the bar last September because "business was so bad."

"We were already doing poorly prior to the [ban], and when it was implemented, we just could not keep up with the operation costs anymore," Montserrat said.

PASAY Road is now just a shadow of itself. One by one, the bars are closing down, like Jeje (above shown) beside Cable Car, all or account of a smoke City measure.

Ricky Bautista, Cable Car's maintenance man, said it would spell quite a difference if Makati officials were to allow smokers to occupy half the space allotted for them in restaurants and bars.

Under the ordinance, restaurants are required to construct separate enclosures for smokers. Designated smoking areas in restaurants should be 15 percent of the total dining area, while bars could have 25 percent.

Establishments that refuse to comply run the risk of closure.

De Guzman felt sad for those who worked at Jeje.

"I pity my ex-workers because they will be jobless and depressed this Christmas," he said.

Sunday BIZ

E-mail: pi_business@inquirer.com.ph

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Rapino

Tax issues may cause firm to go up in smoke

By Michelle V. Ramos

WHAT became a successful venture into the tobacco industry for 68 years is turning out to be a tale of a family-owned corporation having possible closure because of tax problems.

La Suerte Cigar and Cigarette Factory, said to lead it over cigarette makers when it was manufacturing popular cigarette brands Philip Morris and Marlboro between 1955 and 2002. However, when the two foreign brands decided to set up shop in the country, La Suerte shifted to manufacturing local brands successfully Lakas of Astro and Memphis after its shutdown year 2000, there 357.79 million packs in 2002.

Today it has scaled down production substantially after the Bureau of Internal Revenue turned over with a ruling that increases by as much as 600 percent the taxes imposed on its current brands Astro and Memphis.

Vice president for operations Antonio Tan says in an exclusive interview with the business that the cigarette firm, founded in 1919 by the Telengsan brothers, has reduced operations to only two or three days per week since coming down to production volume. He also said it has stopped releasing items and Memphis to the local market because they could not anymore compete with counterpart brands.

Employees union president Ely ito Mitsangan says the scaled down operations have significantly affected the take-home pay of workers, who have given their own share of shares against the revenue regulations for fear of losing their jobs.

Singled out?

According to Tan, La Suerte is fully supportive of proposals filed in Congress to increase taxes imposed on so-called sin products as long as the rates will cover all cigarette brands to ensure a level playing field. The problem with the revenue regulations, La Suerte says, is that it covers only new cigarette brands, making it feel like it is being singled out by the government.

RR No. 22-2002 imposes high- er tax rates on new cigarette brands...or those that have been introduced in the market after 1997,...including Astro and Memphis of La Suerte, and Lucky Strike, Philip Morris 1998 and Winston of other cigarette firms.

Tan says among those covered by the increase in tax rates, La Suerte is the most affected because Astro and Memphis account for a bulk—or 98 percent—of the industry's total monthly production of 100,000 cases of new cigarette brands.

He adds that unlike other cigarette firms that have old and more popular brands to carry their businesses, La Suerte depended heavily on Astro and Memphis for income.

RR 22-2002 imposes the following new tax rates: P33.44 per pack for brands that have a net retail price of at least P30; P8.90 for brands that cost P6.20 to P30 per pack; 39.10 those that have a net retail price of P5 to P6.20 per pack; and P1.12 for brands worth less than P5 per pack.

TURN TO...

FOR four years, Rey Pacolor has been making and selling his custom-made Christmas decorations in downtown Legazpi.

Runaway finds home with Santas and reindeer

By Gil Francis Remalo
Phl Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—For almost four years now, Rey Pacolor, 35, and a resident of Pilar, Sorsogon, has been making and selling Christmas decorations of various kinds in this city's busy downtown area.

"No one would ever believe that it was purely accidental that I ventured in this kind of work. I never liked arts nor making this kind of stuff, but finding a job without a college degree is very hard, so I decided to undergo training in handicraft making.

And with God's help, I then fell in love with this job," he says.

Making impressive and remarkable Christmas decors has always been his "Christmas gift" to the Bicolnon. When September comes, many people are already anticipating for the first display of his works. At this time, orders start to come.

Runaway

Due to poverty and inability to finish his schooling, Pacolor ran away from home to try his luck in Metro Manila.

He is the eldest among nine children, thus pressure on him to earn income to help his parents and siblings was too heavy.

During his missionary years, he spent his youth in some parts of Metro Manila and in different provinces in Region IV like Batangas, Mindoro, Quezon and Cavite. He even went Cebu, Samar and Iloilo. He was later employed as a worker in the Project A handicraft factory in Quezon City where for 14 years he learned the skills in making handicrafts.

But nothing good happened in his life. In 1999, he returned to his hometown of Pilar in Sorsogon. But after just two months he decided to go back to Legazpi City, the regional center of Bicol, and started making Christmas decors made of narra.

Since then he has established himself as the leading maker of Santa Claus, Sorority, angels and Nio. Nito figures as well as batteries and Christmas trees.

From the time he decided to stay in Legazpi City for good and started his enterprise, his works have fascinated Bicolnons all over the region.

Pacolor has buyers in the region's six provinces that have been tapping and requesting his products. Moving from Pilar to Legazpi City, he says, was one of the most important decisions that he had ever made in his life since strategically, the marketability of his craft is assured.

One-man labor

The business has witnessed how Pacolor worked on his products alone. For almost four years now, he has been renting a small yet very strategic place in downtown Legazpi near the

TURN TO...

What it takes to be a meat retailer

MONTEREY Foods Corp., the country's largest meat retailer and the only one with firm national operations, boasts of 262 outlets nationwide from only four in 1980 following strong interest among entrepreneurs to acquire a Monterey meat shop under a time-tested and success-proven franchising agreement.

The growth of Monterey outlets phenomenal, reaching 156 nationwide in 1999 following the opening of Monterey franchise system. To date, a total of 262 Monterey meatshops have outlets. Sibol is most franchised niche throughout the country. Of these outlets, 104 are located in Metro Manila, 28 in North Luzon, 41 in South Luzon and 59 in Visayas and Mindanao. Fifty-four provinces are under franchise and forty-six provinces are company-owned and operated.

Monterey franchisee Alex Agustin said that three years after he got his first Monterey Meatshop, he now has three outlets in Tarlac (four until Nhing, Tarlac and in Pantabangan.

"A Monterey franchise can be your family's ticket to a world of opportunities and financial security. I can honestly say that joining Monterey is one of the best business decisions I have ever made," Agustin said.

Loren Virginia, who has a Monterey meatshop in Bonar Living, Batangas, said: "Monterey has provided us the skills, methodology and techniques to operate a business in the world of meat retailing more responsive and effective in the workplace resulting in better sales."

Bergelio cited Monterey for its good merchandising system noting that the "success of your retail business is the result of a good merchandising system."

Joining the Monterey Franchise System, you get a proven operation system of meat retailing. You also get a tremendous amount of help from experts in the business trainers, site specialists, money people and operations people," said Ina Torres, owner of a Monterey franchise in Harrison Plaza.

Because Monterey has an integrated "farm to meat" operation, Monterey franchisees are assured of a stable supply of quality meat products at reasonable prices. They exclusively sell a wide range of Monterey fresh and fried products as well as Monterey Ready-to-Cook Meats, Magarrie Chicken and Pure Foods chicken, hotdogs and other processed products. Franchisees get Monterey Meatshop is also equipped with a modern meat fabrication facility. On top of these, the Monterey Meatshop is manned by a crew of butchers and merchandisers specially trained at the Monterey Meat School.

What does it take to become a Monterey franchisee?

Estimated initial capital—P 1.3 million

Franchise fee—P 120,000 + VAT

Area requirement—approximately 45 square meters

In addition to the financial requirements, a Monterey investor must be of high integrity and strong commitment, and should have outside financial capability, good people-handling skills and hands-on management style.

A total meat company that is backed by a rich, reputable history with support such dedication by a Monterey Meatshop franchisee. Joining Monterey Farm Corp., the firm began in 1989 with one 1,200-hectare cattle ranch in Infanta. In 1992, it became a subsidiary of San Miguel Corp., the Philippines' largest food and beverage conglomerate.

It is now the country's largest hog and cattle operations and has the latest technology in feed milling, breeding, livestock raising, slaughtering, meat retailing and meat processing.

Good food, art and small talk keep this café afloat

By Joyce Magbiran and Ronnie Lavoja
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—Never did it occur to the mind of Dilette Peralta, a Food Technology graduate of the University of the Philippines, that her passion for food plus the artistry of her elder brother would turn their small family business into a favorite cafe for people from various walks of life.

Established in 1995, Small Talk Cafe, located in the heart of Albay District, has become one of the more sought-after dining places in Legazpi City today.

Dining henchmar and dinner, visitors of various models can be seen packed on lunch rules of Dona Aurora Street where the establishment is located as interests never their favorite dishes.

As Senator Blessed Villar said, "It's certainly a nice surprise to see a quaint and wholesome eating place in Legazpi."

Experimental business

After the death of her father, the former Aquinas University College of Law dean, Vicente Peralta, Dilette says she and her siblings decided to put up a small business. But as to what kind of business would be the best, they didn't know.

She admits that they had no background in handling any business at all.

"We actually raised several businesses but they didn't work out well, until my brother Jerry and I came up with the idea of a small cafe using a portion of our ancestral house," Dilette says.

And so, the Small Talk Cafe was born.

Why the name Small Talk? Dilette replies: "Actually we had several options but it was the one approved by the Department of Trade and Industry."

SMALL Talk Café offers great foods and a very cool ambiance.

Different roles

Before, being a food enthusiast is the one in charge of the food, while Jerry takes charge of the interior design. There were other siblings who have their parts in the business.

"My mom even has a role to play. She's good in entertaining customers and has a very good PR," Dilette says.

She says she grew up her career is a food-inspired second company to look after their business.

At first, she recalls, she was wary of the food they served since she prepared food that she liked.

"I wanted something new to Legazpi and I wanted my foods quite different from the rest," she says.

But everything became a success when, suddenly, initial customers kept on coming back and expressed satisfaction over the taste of the food that they served.

This time, they still keep on coming...but with friends and relatives already.

Food fusion

Dilette made a difference by combining western foods with local touch—like the pasta pinangat, fried express pasta and pili cheese strips, among other local delicacies.

"It's like a fusion of east and west and everybody seems to like it," she stresses. The menus are carefully studied, especially those that are innovated.

"I cannot do it only very well the food. Like the pasta pinangat, I served it first to my friends and relatives and when they and I were all satisfied with the taste, that was the only time we offered it to the customers."

Small Talk also serves dishes common to other restaurants, but must look to maintain and surpass.

Ambiance

Julius Magbiraji, who happened to drop by the place during one of his tours in office, joined dinner in the guest book. "Gaan ako, mag-enjoy ako ng ambiance."

The 320-square-meter cafe provides jazz music on the background, with the walls decorated with old photos and antique displays and other memorabilia that depict the lifestyle of people in Albay, mostly in the dramatic black and white pictures taken as early as 1920s.

Dilette says they researched and looked for the photos from friends and other sources throughout the province.

The gallery adds attraction to the lovely place.

On the other side, a glass partitioning made by Jerry that sits on a miniature garden also fascinates their customers.

"Sometimes our customers would ask if we have an interior designer and I said 'no'," she says.

Jerry, according to Dilette, knows art but those to reach journalists.

Even the cashier's room is unique, aside from being immaculately maintained.

"Instead of putting the usual male and female tags, we looked for cute old clippings that depict a male and a female and pasted those on the doors."

Growing

Now, Small Talk is no longer small, as it has its own regular clients, mostly professionals and businessmen.

Some government and private agencies even date dinner for during in the cafe.

Some important figures like senators, cabinet officials and foreign ambassadors have already dined in the place, aside from famous show biz and media personalities.

The growing influx of customers is what Dilette and siblings to open up the other portion of their house for expansion.

"We are now ready to hold small seminars and parties," Dilette says.

They also cater to any occasion with up to 300 people capacity.

"I don't accept bigger parties because I don't want to push myself into something that we cannot do," Dilette says everyday is quite fulfilling since "Everyday is a positive day. The place is really full packed during lunch time."

They are planning to open another outlet in Naga City.

They reject suggestions to expand their place and put a second floor in their residence since, according to her, they want to preserve the natural designs of their home that was built in the 1940s.

Asked what's their secret in keeping the business afloat to, Dilette reveals, "It's the unending quest for good foods."

Runaway finds home . . .

Union Bank and Shoemey drag 2002

Dilibe to his previous job in Pro- ject 8 handicraft factory, where they were more than 100 Christmas decor makers, but he both serves as the maker and seller of his work.

With only a small working capital, he can't afford to pay any other helpers.

"The capital that I've invested in this was my savings from my previous job in Project A in Quezon City," he humbly says.

But with his perseverance, indeed small craftsman's dream is satisfied the orders of his buyers even if he works alone.

For the last four years, he has survived and has increased his income through his one-man enterprise. "Many people have been astonished every time they learn that I work alone. They often asked me if I still have time to rest. Of course, I have been here for four years so I'm used to it already," he says confidently.

In just one day, Pancho can finish a mere three figure of a Santa Claus and the reindeer. Sometimes if he goes on overtime, he can even start the Nativity and finish a piece of Christmas town.

Masterpiece

For Pancho, the figures of Santa Claus and the reindeer are what he considers as his masterpiece though he also shifts to other types of craftsmanship. "I really find it rewarding and interesting to work on Santa Claus since my mother have lived and how long I would think it. I feel fulfilled and very satisfied," he says.

Santa Claus and the reindeers are Pancho's main products.

He tells the business that when he was still in Manila, he used to take more than a week before he could finish it. But when he mastered the art of crafting it, he eventually learned to love making the decor, which became his favorite. He even customizes his clients on how they want their Christmas decor to look.

Some people order Santa Claus figures that are higher than two feet, in normal size. The Santa Claus decor has become a common accessories decorate among the impressed houses in fact, some hotels, restaurants, government offices and schools have displayed his works.

Each figure costs P 1,300 and it entirely made of the wooden cuts of the rubber tree, Pancho says.

He says it is half the price of similar Christmas decor being sold in Metro Manila and neighboring regions. He adds that even his angels and the Nativity have been sold at a very low price of P1,700.

Compared to the triple-priced similar items in Manila, Davidson's and exhibitors are qualities of his products, which if considered, can last up to three to five years.

But since his product came out only during Christmas season, many thing would last more than five years, especially if properly stored. "Sometimes I tell my clients about the technique that I use to make my handicrafts last longer. I'm very happy when they follow it, as they become customers to the products' durability and endurance, compared to the usual but very costly designs they buy in leading department stores and commercialized market," Pancho claims.

He says that despite heavy workload during the Christmas season, making and selling his own decor make him proud and happy...especially if the customers appreciate the aesthetic qualities of his products. Though there are times that he wants to quit, he is glad that he has customers who make advance orders even in the months of July or September.

"It's almost the same experience I had when I was still in Quezon City, where making Christmas decor is a seasonal but profitable business," Pancho says, adding that he feels thankful for having been trained to handicraft making for more than a decade. "Every time I remember that memorable experience all I can ever think is to thank God for giving me the opportunity to be where I am today," he says.

A similar incident happened in 1997 when the production of its former brand Surfer had to be stopped after the BIR placed the cigarette brand in a higher tax bracket.

Fortune Tobacco however was still the exclusive distributor of the foreign brands Philip Morris and Marlboro, which compose the bulk of its production and which were doing well in terms of market share.

Philip Morris ended its partnership with Fortune, which is now the foreign cigarette maker established its own manufacturing facility in Batangas last last year.

The breaking of La Suerte and Philip Morris forced the former to be dependent on two brands Asian Focus and Champion, which is confined to the market in 1999.

Defect in the law

Although higher revenue will result from the imposition of high- er tax rates on all cigarette brands, the revenue agency says only seven newly introduced brands because the Tax Code, which has been revised in 1996, only allows importation of cigarette brands introduced in the market after the law was enacted.

"The revenue regulation practically discouraged the entry of new players in the industry because it allows the BIR to increase their taxes anytime, while making old cigarette brand makers to enjoy lower tax rates," he says.

Officials of La Suerte recently met with Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. to ask him to defer the implementation of RR 23-2002 until such time Congress passes a bill that will supersede the perceived-to-be flawed revenue regulation and that will require the indexation of all—old and new—cigarette brands.

He admits, however, that La Suerte is losing hope Congress will be able to pass any of the pending bills soon because legislators are more to be preoccupied by the coming elections.

"We (Parayno) says he would not favor a deferment of the revenue regulation, but that he is leaving the court to decide on the matter," Sun says.

Sun was referring to the case filed by La Suerte asking for an injunction or RR 22-2002. He says the company is questioning the legality of the regulation because the Constitution requires equity in taxation.

He, however, says La Suerte does not foresee being long it will take the court to make a decision.

The revenue agency is expecting some P1.4 billion in additional revenue from the issuance of RR No.22-2002. The new revenue regulation is among other moves of the BIR that aimed at hitting a higher revenue collection.

While other efforts to improve collections, such as computerized voter added tax on professionals, proved to be fruitful...the capability of RR 22-2002 to generate more revenue has been put to question if mid when Memphis and Asian made a premature exit from the local market. RR 22-2002 ironically resulted in the lowest revenue sources.

Effects on tobacco farmers

Meanwhile, La Suerte is merely depending on Green and a money from old brand Golden Key for its local revenues.

But the production volume for these two brands are significantly lower than the firm's previous production level of about 150,000 cases a month and therefore per month. The production volume of Canon, he says, is only at 2,000 to 3,000 cases per month, while that of Golden Key is much smaller.

This condition poses a threat not only to workers of La Suerte but to the 35,000 to 45,000 tobacco farmers in Northern Luzon and the estimated 2,000 workers of tobacco dealers that depend largely on La Suerte's orders, says Yu.

He added that La Suerte is currently close to 30 percent of the business' production for 2002, and that it has been sourcing most of its tobacco requirements from Canada while other cigarette firms who got their raw materials abroad.

The farmers, who are based in the provinces of La Union, Ilocos and Isabela, have given their own share of protests against the cessation of production. During La Suerte's workers during their visit to the DOF to request for the deferment of the revenue regulation, some tobacco farmers also raised the issue fear of being displaced from work.

Trying to survive

With the thousands of company workers, tobacco farmers and local tobacco dealers to be affected by a company closure, Yao says La Suerte is working for ways to survive.

He says the company is now entertaining the idea of engaging in the export business. La Suerte, he adds, will find out whether selling its brands abroad would be a good move in case it finds its current market.

The company official adds that the firm would start with a small export volume to any Southeast Asian country.

"La Suerte is trying hard to come to business because as much as possible we do not want to layoff an employee," said Sun.

He added, however, that the company might be forced to cut down the number of its production once labor should the cases decline as a result of the implementation of the RR 22-2002.

GEN. Juan Ponce visits Bicolano (in blue) during one of the senator's visit in Legazpi.

Tax issues may cause firm to go up in smoke

Taipan takes his mall design out of the box

TAIPAN Henry Sy Sr. at the newly opened SM City Baguio

WHEN SM City Baguio opened its doors to the public last weekend, visitors to mall were not only amazed at the mix of great shopping, leisure, and entertainment, but also at the beauty of the mall.

Novice like structures following the land's terrain ... a canopy like roof at the center of the atrium ... a scenic elevator ... pine trees and flowers all around.

The mall's conversion and design team, Design International, a foreign design consultant; four Star Ung and Associates, architects; Baw Golden City general contractors; and SM Abode and Assurance collaborated with SM's engineering group to bring the traditional SM mall design, or they say, out of the box.

More than that, the mall's design and features make it a very environment-friendly mall. The nearly roofing at the mall's atrium, for example, is not only an attraction, but also allows for natural ventilation to the mall. As such, visitors to the mall's common areas can enjoy Baguio's cool mountain air.

In a city known for its concern about nature, the mall owners and executives wanted.

The mall's structure likewise allows shoppers to view Baguio's breathtaking beauty even indoors. The curtains give one a breathtaking view of the beauty of Baguio, the mountains in front and the city and mountains at the back. When SM Founders and Chuk Henry Sy, Sr. opened the mall to the public last Nov. 22, he did not open a door as before, but pushed a button for the curtain-height glass doors to rise up. These glass doors allow one to see the outdoors, a first in the Philippines.

Located on a 71,782-square meter property at the site of the former Plaza Hotel in Session, SM City Baguio is the 16th SM Supermall. It has 306,224 square meters and six levels of great shopping leisure and entertainment.

SM City Baguio has 800 parking slots.

BAGUIO City Mayor Bernardo Vergara welcomes Dejamil president and CEO Sandy Prisco-Ramusaldez. Looking on are SM president Teresita Sy-Coson and First VP Hilda Ocson.

New player gives away new phones

SUN Cellular, promoter "Text Blast," the ultimate mobile phone mania being held simultaneously across the country from Nov. 28 to Dec. 15, 2003.

Following the success of Sunmobile, "Text Blast" features exciting free gifts-rewards and free phones for select Sun Cellular plan subscriptions and awesome prizes ranging from cool vacation treats to high-tech gadgets and appliances. Plus, an exciting musical showcase from the hottest bands and the brightest music artists is yours to enjoy in the most happening venues.

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He used to help repair people's lives; now he fixes cars

By Alexa N. Bacay

BUTCH Salvador was together for 12 years before resigning to try his luck in sales. He tried selling everything from real estate to coffins.

But it was 1998, claims Butch, as everybody was waiting for the next thing to happen. Nobody wanted to invest in buy anything. With his 14 months of unemployment, he started at home with only P30 and some orders to secure in between him and starvation.

Then he read Napoleon Hills' book, "Think and Grow Rich," which told him to believe he was rich. And he did.

Following the book's prescriptions, he counted money even if he didn't have it yet. He believed he had a sales car, and he had no defense yet. He was so confident and at that moment, the idea formed Car Magic came to mind.

He didn't waste time and started to make leaflets. He asked his cousin to print it, done with the P 30-pesa bill. Said it photocopied.

The cause to the subway brought Butch to Makati, where he distributed the leaflets. At night, he would call his mom from a neighbor's house to check if a prospective customer had inquired about his business. A certain Mrs. Pangasinan from Magnolia Village owned an Isa Isuzu truck.

Running low on funds, Butch urged his first customer to subscribe her car immediately. So bringing along a friend who was a painter, the two set out for her house to check her car.

Butch had to ask for P500 in downpayment then waited for a point center to buy small quantities of metallic thinner and paint.

With P80 left from the downpayment, he came back to Mrs. Pangasinan's house and started the work on her car.

First customer

Things would have gone well, but the paint didn't match the car's original color. Butch had to work back to the point center to have another set mixed.

The problem was he only had P80 left...and his bill added to P120. So Butch got a spare Rustlon dent from his car and told the paint center to keep it in case he doesn't pay back the remaining P40.

Butch then rushed back to the job site to finish the car, and Mrs. Pangasinan was happy with the result.

When she paid the balance, Butch swore to himself, "I'll never run out of money again."

That first customer paved the way for Car Magic's success.

Car Magic's name came from Andrew Carnegie's magical formula, which tells one to believe in something and with faith, that something will come true.

After Mrs. Pangasinan, Butch worked hard as the money payment he received, put all it went to making more leaflets and distributing it to motorists. Butch could be seen walking with cigarette vendors along Buendia Ave. and Libis, distributing leaflets.

He was able to advertise his business in a magazine, and soon, somebody approached him for a franchise. Then a radio station became interested in the business and had it featured in a show.

House service

Car Magic targets the 8 and 10-month-olds when their cars to look good but don't have the time to bring them across the motor shop. Car Magic solves the problem by providing one-day home service.

"Our selling point is the one-day home service. Compared with the others, our price is lower and yet we give very good service and we use quality materials," says Butch.

Car Magic staff usually arrive at the job site at 9:30 in the morning and finish the job by 5 in the afternoon.

There was a time when a friend of Butch's rammed their family car into a post. He immediately sought Butch's help to have the car fixed before his dad's mother-in-law sees it, they had a friend and fellow member of church and members.

Three important things keep Car Magic going. First is Salvador's desire to make it work. It is his dream and he wants it to be successful. Second is their customers.

"We are committed to our clients because we give quality service. We give them convenience," says Butch.

Third is honesty.

"There's another thing. If you leave your car and you have valuable stuff inside, believe me, nothing missing there. My people would not touch it. They are trained that way," assures Butch.

Old cars

Car Magic aims to 10-year-old cars because older cars are models that do not sell. Car Magic is also does not discuss car brands. Butch says he even had a client who owns a car rammed on.

The company is open for franchising. Car Magic currently has four franchises in Quezon City, Antipolo, Pasig and Pateros. Requirement include an office, a vehicle and a phone line.

BUTCH Salvador had P 80 between him and starvation when he struck on a brilliant idea

"Sus ang pasod ng negosyo, libre serve home service, people love to call you up," explains Butch.

And like other industries, there are people who think that they can just copy Car Magic's idea and be just as successful.

Butch, however, says that he keeps some business secrets to himself, so whoever tries to steal ideas would be left wanting.

Butch chose the brothers because he saw the need for it. Majority of cars today have dents and scratches on them but owners wouldn't even bother to have them fixed. For one, they don't have time. And secondly, they don't trust leaving their cars anymore just to have the dents and scratches removed.

"Ang ayaw nakakakuha ng negosyo? Nagkakapitbisig ng pasa," reveals Butch. "Another thing, pinagpasa yung isang car. Check ako nalang the next day, bumas na yon. People don't want to wait anymore. They say that unless you dent or run home, maybe we'll trust you.

(For inquiries on Car Magic's services, call 948-1479 or 09.17.820.2165)

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A blast of good music from the country's top performing bands and music artists will headline "Sun Blast" at Shangri-la Mall's Mercurio-go every Friday and Saturday beginning May 28 to Dec. 20.

For more details, please visit Sun Cellular's website at www.suncellular.com or call the Sun Cellular hotline at 205-4000.

Ex-OFW gets financial taste of 'suka'

HOLIDAY returned home realizing that his luck could only be found in his native town of Daraga.

DARAGA, Albay—For almost 20 years, the homemade "suka" industry in the province of Albay has been dormant because local entrepreneurs concentrated on the more financially rewarding handicraft, pili and bonsai plant ventures. But finding no luck in his various employment stints down Rafael Montalbana to review his family's homemade coco business, and he made good.

"In 1930s, this town was known for coke, dinahong and homemade suka. Only a few now know that all these chain products started here and perhaps, were the most popular then. My late grandfather Esteban Montalbana became very popular here because of this business," Montalbana says.

The seven towns of Daraga was known for massive production of abaca and copra. Thus, a large volume of coconut juice had become available for making tuba, lambanog and homemade suka.

Homemade suka is natural vinegar, which is made entirely from the tuba extracted from the coconut.

It undergoes a period of fermentation and vinegar. No other ingredient or preservative is added.

Montalbana adds that even people from other provinces in the Bicol Region came to visit their town just to buy the products.

"Eventually, my parents managed the business after Lolo Teban died, and with God's help it became a fortune for us since all of my siblings were able to graduate from college," he claims.

Fortune in suka

Montalbana discloses that it was in the late '90s that he decided to revive the old family business.

From the '70s to late '80s, he had worked as an employee in Manila. His income was not enough for his family so he worked in Saudi Arabia as an electrician.

But after two years of what he considered as "survival of the fittest," he returned home, realizing that his luck could only be found in his native town of Daraga.

He was right.

"I came to realize that my family then was able to survive on producing and selling homemade suka. So, without hesitation, I decided that it was high time that I should go back to the old family business."

Soon, people all over the region have once again come to know of his family's homemade suka, which is natural and pure.

"There are businessmen and tourists from Naga and Sorsogon who would visit my residence just to buy suka," he says.

Montalbana added that there are buyers who would bring his product to Manila.

"Some of my customers told me that aside from the usual pandabong (the pili nut candies, pinangat and bags made from abaca, homemade suka has become part of their lists," he says.

With increased demand for his suka, Montalbana does not only produce by the small bottles or gallons but also by barrels or cans.

But Montalbana said he sells it for less than the original price to those who also sell his product on installment.

Quality

Montalbana admits that he has to experiment once again since he has found some "missing vital steps in the procedure" to making suka, especially in getting the right taste.

He reiterates that fermentation and making (require) a very long period just to make sure the suka has the quality taste.

It takes a minimum of three months up to six months before one can savor the natural taste of it.

Just like the processes involved in making the robust red wine, homemade suka requires maximum exposure to extensive natural fermentation, proper bottling and long duration of smoking for there's lot of residue and sediments that might affect the product's taste.

"Perhaps, the number one problem here is the tuba. If it's rainy season, automatically there's no kind of suka. In addition, only few farmlands here produce tuba, which I buy to make the suka. We have a small farmland in Sumlang, Camalig but the production of tuba in that place is very limited, too," Montalbana says.

His other problem is that there are peddlers that sell low-quality tuba, which results in the poor taste of suka.

"There are times that the demand is very high but the supply and production are very low. So, I have to reject other orders or sometimes, I have to explain to them that it will take another six months or even a year to make it," Montalbana says.

To find solution to the low-quality tuba, Montalbana made an agreement with the farmers that if the tuba is of good quality, he will learn to return it to them, since he doesn't want to compromise and even sacrifice the taste that his homemade suka has been known for.

Supply problem

To solve the supply problem, he says to it that he maximize harvests of removed suka in his coco trees.

Montalbana notes that suka becomes sour if it is stocked in the kitchen longer.

"The good thing about my homemade suka is that its taste keeps on becoming better and better. There are instances that once the taste becomes very strong due to the long duration of smoking, it can already be used as a dishwashing material or in cleaning toilets, tiles and lavatory. It's as good as muriatic acid in killing germs," he claims.

He adds that suka could be also used in washing clothes since it's good dirt cleaner like laundry powders and bars.

The Philippine Coconut Authority Region V told Montalbana that it is planning to produce more tuba instead of copra, since the PCA sees the vitality and practicability of producing it for making homemade suka.

This is aside from the fact that copra production nowadays is practically no longer good in the Bicol Region. Jeff Francis G. Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SAFARI. Montalbana's homemade suka, which is made from the tuba extracted from the coconut.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

A so-LA climax to UP Concert Chorus' international tour

Text and photos by Jimi and Ruben Magalso
Z-A Co correspondents

LOS ANGELES—The University of the Philippines Concert Chorus (UPCC) recently concluded its gold prize-winning 2003 international concert tour here with a so-Hollywood mini concert at a Music Arts institute, where when Rise diva Mary Pickford used to live, and now home to UP alum at Edwin and Dr. Lara Raquel.

And what could be more LA than having the concert by the pool?

Guests gathered around the pool as the UPCC members showed the style and versatility that made them win the top prize in the 51st Guido d'Arezzo International Polyphonic Competition in Italy and three gold prizes in the Fredericton Internationale Chorwoche in Mannheim, Germany.

Assistant Conrad Granted Edwin Ibañez and his wife Betty organized the celebration to honor the UPCC's 30 singers and creative artistic director, Prof. Jerry "Ed" Galvez Antonio, to climax their 10th international concert tour.

The chorale also represented the Philippines at the 51st Giovanni International Youth Festival and the prestigious Barcelona Choral Festival. It won honorable mention in Grandezza the group to an international encore tour since taking over from her mentor, the late-renowned Dean Rey Paguio.

"With the spread of the Ibañez home serving as a beautiful setting, the show, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary, performed a diverse repertoire of polyphonic sacred, Broadway, Filipino folk, ethnic and pop songs.

In the sky full of contrasts and rich with unexpected experiences, what can be more exciting than listening to the choir sing Ilaw Gumaela's silly Batchanovian lyrics to "Maha, Lobi Ako" in the Ibañez home of a Hollywood legend that is now owned by a successful Filipino couple?

Lounging in the splendor of the estate "Mahirmoud Ali and seven-time Oscar winner listening to Gumaela 1968 Merienpop rendering from like "Mahal pa ang mga unang sayaw ng ating mga mata" and "Mahal pa ang pinagsaluhang sandaliran ng 'mahal'", we couldn't help but smile, even chuckle at this wonderful incongruity in synchronicity.

But wonder was then seen at three songs were performed by the chorale: one in a cappella, with Ed's choreography, an embody fellini the pool.

The invitation-only luncheon, a mix of prominent personalities from LA's entertainment, diplomatic community, environment, arts and culture, government and business, was on the other side of the pool on the end of the mini concert to applaud the UPCC.

Consulate congratulated for the Ibañez for successfully organizing the event on such short notice. Dr. Fernando Bautista, Awards president of the International Philharmonic Association of Los Angeles, told Betty, "What a privilege to have been invited to such an incredible performance. I don't think any enough for such insightful praise."

Design house

But stronger stories are made more remarkable when we learned that the Ibañels and their young daughter had actually just moved back in the day before. Edwin, who is top executive in the Westinghouse Inc., said he and his family had to live elsewhere while their house was gutted to final existing zones in the classic 2001 Design House of the Architecture League of Southern California.

For three months since September, the mansion in exclusive Hancock Park (where Angela Bassett and some celebrities have been viewed as a showcase house for a weekly rental—to some individuals and families as used in the movies) in area. (The house has been seen in films and TV series like "Rocky," "Rich Man, Poor Man" and "Murder She Wrote.")

Mollie Lim, Ibañez friend and herself an ensemble member of the UPCC, thanked and presented flowers to the Ibañels and Raquels, who are among the most active boosters of Filipino culture in southern California.

The event, presented with the help of the UPCC Alumni Foundation Inc. members in-

CHORUS members relax in the garden beside the mansion's ballroom before their performance.

THE OFFICIAL State University choir performs an eclectic repertoire of fully choreographed sacred, polyphonic, gospel, Broadway and Filipino folk and pop songs.

A so-LA climax to UP Concert Chorus' international tour

ing to LA, raised funds for the UPCC, which was scheduled to fly home the following day after seven months on the road to the US and Europe and away from their classes at UP.

When we asked some of the chorus members the best things they would do when they land in Manila, no one was more definite in his plans than tenor Reinhold Rikkoh "Reikoh" Ramos.

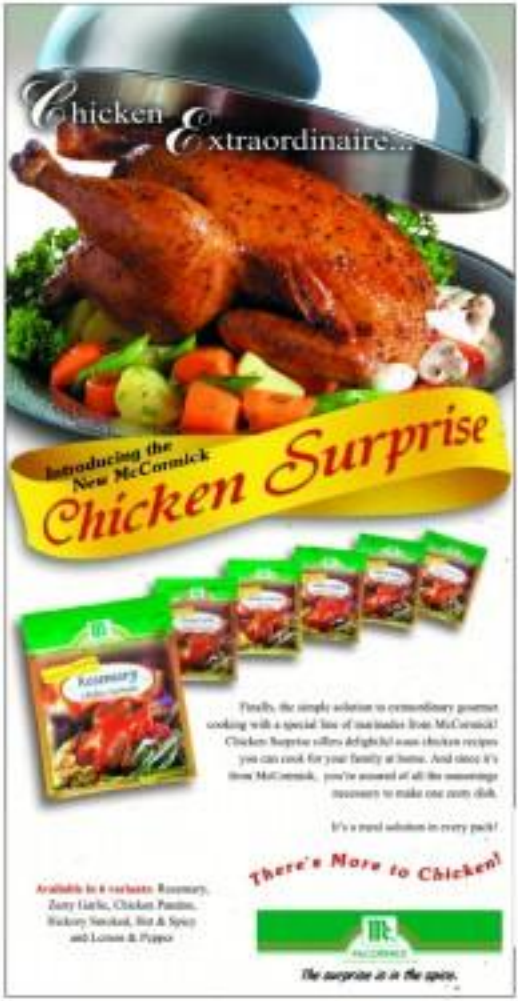
As for their most memorable experience on the road, several members will cherish for a long time "the unaccompanied standing ovation given to us in Aberdeen, Scotland."

When we asked Assistant for the most amusing incident, she recalled with a smile the incident when the entire barrow of a male chorus members broke loose and his trousers dropped revealings in Italy. Obviously it wasn't part of a fully choreographed number.

The term "Full House" was probably coined by this UPCC member "simply too much pasta," said Imasen with a laugh.

THE AUDIENCE gives UPCC a standing ovation.

UP ALUMNA and noted organizer Bob's Dean Dr. Ray Soller, a member of the International Committee of the Philharmonic Association of LA. Ginger Barnard, deputy chief of protocol, Los Angeles County and Dr. Francisco Balaguian, former president of the International Committee of the Philharmonic Association of LA.



RP as world's Christmas capital

THIS year the Gifting Pilipino Movement (GPM) has launched a unique and heart-warming showcase of what is good and excellent about a "gifting"—about being Filipino through the Balandrong Gifting Pilipino (BGP) 2003 project.

The project's aim is really Filipinos here and abroad to project the Philippines as the "Christmas capital of the world."

GPM will spearhead the "Lights-a-Tree-for-Unity" project, a fund-raising drive for the benefit of five indigent schools, and Christmas tree and light bulbs as the medium of donation.

Red bulbs will go to the Red Cross, green bulbs to Bantay Kalikasan, yellow bulbs to DSWD Children's Villages Philippines, blue bulbs to Peace Build Movement and white bulbs for Gawad Kalinga for the Elderly.

Corporations or groups can sponsor P20 trees for P5,000; individuals can make colored bulb donations at P250 each. Donors may also select the cause to which their donation will be applied. The United Appliance Dealers Association of the Philippines provided the Christmas tree design.

On Dec. 16 at 7 p.m., the project will be launched with the simultaneous lighting of the 100 trees at the Garden Park and the singing of "Pasko Na Naman," hopefully to usher in by every Filipino wherever he or she may be in the world.

Call 6443000 or 8972255 loc 6553089 or visit www.gpm-pilipinas.com.

Weddings Philippines
Sunday LIFESTYLE

Chic carabao on the catwalk

Text by Chesha V. Moral
Photos by Chito Vesina

YOU'RE invited to witness an exchange of (carabao)vows.

When the bayanihan's masses, the rare grey still named Gaylee, says "I does," or "I do," not just one but 10 of the country's top fashion designers, no less, generously share their talents to come up with their inexpressible of his and its bride's wedding bucks.

Okay. Gaylee (who is gender-less, by the way) may be too young to get hitched as it's only turning 18 next month on the bayanihan's 18th anniversary, but in the make-believe world of dolls and stuffed animals, it's enough that it looks marriageable, the better for creative people to have an excuse to make wedding designs.

Award-winning photojournalist Chito Vesina's chic? Media Matrix, with the Peninsula Days Insurance, Metro Weddings, Philippine

A blaze with colors. . .
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JOJIE Llanos

ERIC Pineda

Chic carabao on the catwalk

FREDERICK Peralta

A contest enjoins aspiring designers to dress up INQUIRER's Guyito for the march down the aisle

BEN Fernandez

RENE Cruz

From page C1

Ateliers, 140m Manila and Wow 89.1, will hold next year's first and grandest bridal fair dubbed "Wedding March at Christmas" on Dec. 10 and 11. The fair's highlight is the "Guyito's Wedding March" competition, which assembles all aspiring designers and hobbyists, 18 years old and above, to dress up a pair of the Inquirer mascot in wedding ensembles of their own design.

Inspired by a similar contest held for Gift Guru for Hello Kitty several years ago, "Guyito's Wedding March" requires participants to buy a pair of Guyito for P550 at the Inquirer main office. Each pair must have participants in one entry form. S/he may submit as many entries as he wants. Deadline for submission is on Dec. 29.

Verina, a seasoned fashion photographer, appealed to his designer friends to do their own take on Guyito's bridal theatrics to drum up interest in the contest. So designers will have their works displayed alongside those of Eddie Badolato, Rhett Eala, Ben Farrales, Raju Laurel, Jojie Llanos, Bobby Nuevasalas, Frederick Peralta, Eric Pineda, Inno Sotto and Nick Tesoro. Winners will also take home cash prizes.

No walk

"[Young designers] should never create walls and ceilings that will limit their vision," Sotto said. He created a simple but decidedly elegant A-line dress with a back panel. "They should be curious about everything, and that curiosity may advance designs."

Save for the panel harness along the front of the dress, there are no other embellishments to the design of Jojie Llanos.

Llanos said it was hard to create the dress because of the dolls' size. "Everything had to be sewn by hand," he said. He's not shifting to miniature design anytime soon, but this designer, known for dress, tailored lines, doesn't mind making "doll[ish]" designs. "I enjoyed it, so fab, ridz!" he said.

Ready-to-wear designer Hermenio expressed he misses challenge. "I'm used to the proportions of a human being, so [doll-sized] not my expertise. But I have a niece and a granddaughter so doing it was fun."

The irreverent Peralta framed out layers upon layers of tulle accented with cascading flowers and headwork. To top the theatrical excess, he crowned the bust with ruffled sequence.

The designer is unapologetic. "It's a doll so I'm allowed to[experiment," Peralta said. Thrusting on the lavishness and opulence of his designs, he added: "I don't like [a design] to be[too minimalist. There should be a colorful/sensational detail."

Nostalgic

"It was nostalgic for me because I used to be a puppet stylist for 'Batibot,'" said Pineda. "The principles of design don't change, whether it's for a doll or a human being. As an artist, you shouldn't be limited [to only one medium]."

Pineda created a full skirt in jacquard organza with a mixed media of sweetness. His right-eye asymmetric top was embellished with Swarovski crystals. Aspiring designers should "have fun," Pineda said.

Raju Laurel echoed the diva. "Designing should be a fun thing [because] fashion is frivolous. It's about escapism. I have the same attitude toward my work. I don't take it seriously."

Laurel paid extra attention to detail to make sure the Guyito bride looked, well, cute. He used black beads to create eyelashes and red rose to form the lips. For good measure, he made use of dressmaker buttons for the straps. The bridal dress is decidedly romantic, with layers of silk and tucs in the skirt that extends into a ball train.

For Badolato, creating a dress for a stuffed animal with fur, limbs...and wound, as client...was "super challenge." But the designer was undeterred, creating crunching ensembles using ballpin brocade. He made sure the design included his signature bustle and train.

Never one to jump on the bandwagon, Tesoro eschewed the white dress and batong/cutside, creating costumes for a peasant wedding instead. "To rural areas! they get married in whatever they have," she said.

As on design perimeters are set, "Guyito's Wedding March" also encourages contestants to be enlightened and unique with their creations.

Criteria for judging are: relevance to the theme (20 percent), originality (20 percent) and creativity (40 percent). [Secondfor contest mechanics on page D6. Call the Inquirer at 8576666 local 258 and 259, or 4h7 Media Matrix at 889-6190.]

E-mail the author at cbuenaventura@inq7.net

LIFESTYLE

SIDE view of Ning Encarnacion-Tan's pre-fab bahay kubo, which can be knocked down for transport and set up anywhere

Perennial as the bamboo

Text by Elizabeth Lolarga
Contributor
Photos by Mel Fernando and Ning Encarnacion

NO one, not even the Big Bad Wolf, can huff, puff and blow this house down. To architect Ning Encarnacion-Tan's mind, it's about time that Filipinos are disabused of the thought that bamboo is a light and inferior building material.

The structure culminates six to three years of research and experimentation in finding out early in the century ballistics discharging the bamboo. The microstructure found out way in bombs. But when Ning combed bibliographies and toured the country while doing research for Gilda Cordero Fernando's "Folk Architecture," she learned a lot about the bamboo's strength and versatility from architect like Francis Lambrecht and Maestro Honoro Ilogh.

"Bamboo can compete with most of our lumber," she said.

In time she would build her own bamboo house, not a playhouse-bahay kubo, in Del Monte, Quezon City where she and husband Ajit lived for 11 years.

It taught her that she did not need much energy. She was able to dispense with television, not missing a bit.

A longtime Zen meditation practitioner, Ning said, "If you want to simplify your life, bamboo is a good medium to work with. You are things that you don't need anymore. You say to yourself, "This is good, this is enough." The material transforms your attitude. A lot of air enters the house. If you're into a more spiritual, less materialistic bend, bamboo is it."

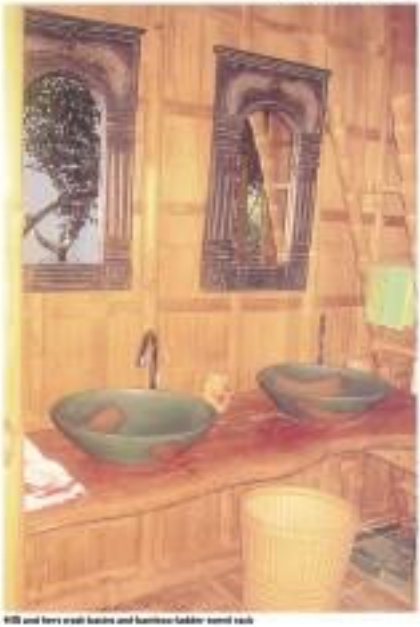
Then the Tan couple found themselves talking about leaving Metro Manila. Ajit, who had finished his term as head of the Foundation for the Philippine Environment, still reserved a vision and mission of working with communities directly involved in environmental activities. He was shifting from nongovernment organization work to people's organization work.

From a choice of areas that they like—Mindoro, Palawan, Zambales, Pinay and Nueva Ecija—they found circumstances leading them to the last province, which has a reforestation program in full blast.

What clinched the decision was the invitation of St. Mary's University (SMU) president Fr. Jose Mendiones for Ning to be the first coordinator of the Center for Vernacular Architecture and Building Technology. Overcoming initial reluctance from some faculty members, she is now "so good at the

BAMBOO roses can have all the modern conveniences—jacuzzi, jalousie, wash basins, faucets. Note futuristic bamboo-and-paper lamp on the ceiling.

The exhibit shows how this miracle grass can be modular and can have the strength of steel



Kiln and bars wash basins and bamboo ladder saved each

Perennial as the bamboo

Continued from A14

passes I can get for the Center."

It is not a coincidence that IMA's metaphors are juxtaposed (the way the pastor is to the University of the Philippines or the eagle to the Senate), is the bamboo.

Education center

The Tans sold their bamboo house to Jojo's brother John, who turned it into a boating place and a venue for seminars. In June last year, they settled in Bayambang, Nueva Vizcaya, which Ning described as "like an old town, a southern version of Dumaguete with plenty of universities. More than 50 percent of SMU students are scholars of some sort. Those of full indigenous blood are entitled to scholarships. They plant the grounds and harvest food. They're up at 4 a.m. cleaning the grounds. Then excel after they graduate because they have a knowledge of how hard life is. So they make it."

The Tans are now stewards of 28.8 hectares of land. There the kalagis (slash-and-burn) method of farming has been drastically reduced and eradicated.

The planting of diverse endemic species, some of them valuable medicinal herbs, restores the fertility of the soil. Lesser known trees and plants are getting recognized for their potential as housing materials.

Ning found their relocation a blessing. "It's delicious—that's the only word I can think of—to design outside the city. Everything is quiet after 8 p.m."

She had time to stroll over here to respond to the challenge hurled by Dr. Jessie Cuenco, owner of Pinoli Art Gallery, for her to develop another bamboo house and exhibit it in his premises. She happened to visit yours, but he was confident she could do it on his.

She said, "The thinking process took a year. It was hard. I gave five times the effort that I would put in a project on this, starting out here to make it modular and worrying what if it fails."

Wendy Fernando-Regidado, her collaborator in the exhibit and in past Bantay Gubat projects and who has been working with bamboo for her lamps for the past three years, assured her, "The fact that it's defined skies, limited in sizes, makes the house manageable."

Ning realized bamboo could reach "the highest structural level, which a modular 'this is ridding ourselves of layers and layers of misinformation."

She showed through her bamboo modules how easy it is to incorporate them to an existing house or to partially make up the house itself. The modules can be moved around, depending on the owner's whim or need.

Ning sought out chemical engineer Joel Ajero to give the proper structural foundation to the house and resident artistic touchup. Artisans Rudy Encinares and Bert Gallaroy, who have been at her side on other bamboo projects, were part of the team that saw the house go up in just two weeks.

Steel's strength

The trick was to prevent the bamboo from rotting by piercing sealants and waterproofing it. Pilot donor additives, bamboo does assumes what Ning described as "the tensile strength of steel and the compressive strength of concrete."

Ning said, "Bamboo is not a material for everything. What we want to show is it can work and be combined with glass, concrete, steel, wood."

Ning is sure that people scrounging from the house will once say "Let's get her for our cabinet" but "I can do that!"

Wendy, who as architect, furnished the modules on exhibit with whimsical lamps made from bamboo branches and handmade paper.

When the bamboo in her yard was being cut, there were "oodles of branches" that were going to be thrown away. She saved them instead and discovered that when the thin branches were tied together, they framed a strong mesh.

Having made fourteen shelters of bamboo and paper for a maker of handmade cards, she was amazed one candle covers that protect the light from the wind produced by electric fans. Wendy then was asked for lamps for one Japanese—and modern—looking lamps.

That spurred her on to develop shapes like the pinhole, cottonseed, pig, harvest basket, umbrella, unicorn horse, a hanger with a checkerboard cut of paper, even a gumboot tree. The last, installed in the gallery's lawn, is constructed with hatche and bamboo branches. It functions as a big lamp that one can get into. Cool!

"The Bamboo Advantage" runs until Jan. 23, 2009, at the Pinoli Art Gallery No. 7 Aurora Blvd., Grand Heights, Antipolo City. For more information, call 6973013.

BAMBOO is native dish shelf at the dinnerware and glassware in the open air

INTERIOR of bamboo-bamboo-cum-module

ARAYAN road panels can yet woven together

WENDY Fernando-Regidado's paper and bamboo cane doubles as a lamp to illuminate the garden.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Antique brass pieces sold by MKM Brassware

Repository of Mindanao's history, culture and tradition

Text and photos by Linda B. Bolido

LOCATED much less urbanized than other major cities in Mindanao, Cotabato City nevertheless anchors much of the history and tradition that makes the Philippines' second largest island different from and yet the same as the rest of the country.

The city is the center and the jewel of the part of Mindanao occupied by the Maguindanaon group of Filipino Muslims. A mighty river, the Rio Grande de Mindanao, runs through it but it also sits close to earthquake faults, according to an architect, making it unwise to build structures higher than five stories.

It seems to be self-taught in that twilight zone between tradition and modernity, but the people of Cotabato pride themselves for its effort, marking what the island has become today.

The city's history is traced back to the 15th century, a century ahead of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan's discovery of the Philippines for Spain in 1521.

Sharif Kabungsuwan (also spelled Sorif Kabungsuan), an Arab missionary, landed along the banks of the country's second largest and Mindanao's longest river, Rahmanian, who would marry into the local royal family, introduced Islam to what became the sultanate of Maguindanao, and the religion would spread from there to a large part of Mindanao and some parts of the Visayas and Luzon.

The Spaniards would strengthen Cotabato's place in Philippine history when it established in the 19th century a military post at Barangay Tamontaka, one of the earliest Christian settlements in fact. Cotabato is adapted from the local phrase for a stone fortress, which the city was during the Spanish era. One of the oldest Catholic churches in the country was built in what is now known as Barangay Tamontaka Mother.

Nurturing a heritage

If much of Mindanao's history sprang from Cotabato's past, the city also established and continues to nurture an artistic and cultural heritage that has made the southern island distinct from the rest of the country. That heritage derives mainly from the Islamic tradition and way of life.

Perennially the origin of those art and craft pieces that northern Filipinos have learned to appreciate with Mindanao would be blurred and, with Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro and primarily Davao City becoming the centers of trade, commerce, political and socio-cultural activities, Cotabato's—and the Maguindanaons'—distinctive heritage gets overlooked in the process.

It is no surprise that Mohamad E. Maog, proprietor of MKM Brassware (tel. 0919-6421065), Imamon, Maog is a sixth-generation brass smith. He started his apprenticeship into the family business at the age of 12 in 1971. Today he is one of eight out of 10 children, who kept the family enterprise alive.

"Brass items come mainly from Cotabato," Maog said. "What people buy in Davao City and other places are made here." He said brassware production remained pretty much a cottage industry and the skill was handed down from generation to generation or transferred to non-family members through apprenticeship. Until now no formal training program on brassware making has been developed or offered.

Maog has 20 workers, 10 of whom he considers permanent. Brassmaking remains a manual process—from design to brass application. Although some workers occasionally bring home their work, much of the procedure has to be done in the MKM compound consisting of two or three small sips from where the iron molds and clay "working" chambers are made and the melted brass poured.

MKM makes the kulintang, a musical instrument consisting of gongs of different sizes, dreamcatcher items and cooking utensils. Workers spend eight hours a day, six days a week (Friday, the Muslim's equivalent of the Christian's Sunday, is a non-working day). Maog said a good worker could finish one large kulintang in three days or three sets in 10 days. A large kulintang

CONTINUED ON PAGE C8

TWO antique octagonal brass jewelry boxes

SALI Sandra Sema, wife of Cotabato City Mayor Datu Muslimin G. Sema and a former education undersecretary, displays her family's collection of antique gongs and other brassware.

THE HAMELODON used for making weaving has remained virtually unchanged through the years.

Repository of Mindanao's history . . .

THE WAX mold of a jewelry box is placed inside a clay container. As melted silver has been is poured, leaving the design impression on the hardening metal.

From page C2

sells for P5,000 in Cotabato while a medium-sized costs P2,500. The smallest that is about as big as a fully telephone sells P1,000.

While the finished products sold in Davao and Zamboanga come from Cotabato City, Maog said the bases they used came from those cities and Marawi and General Santos.

Weaving a history

On the other side of the city, women society is a tradition that has also been part of their lives and those of generations before them. In Barangay Rubdo, Sandilawan, not much different from those used scores of years ago occupy what should have been a retiring areas of many homes. The women of the houses—sister, daughters, nieces, nieces and other female relatives—ply either the home or front in between doing household chores to weave the colorful and silky fabrics they have traditionally worn, the malong.

The designs are pretty much traditional as well, with a few occasional updating like the addition of the modern Mindanao, the sculptures which should be pretty obvious to modern jeepneys.

Like brassmaking, the skills are handed down to younger family members by their elders. Lino Mendoza Maldonado, the chief of the city's southern council, said, "We tried to remember the weaving by putting the looms in one place and making the women work there for a specific number of hours every day, but the women were not comfortable with the arrangement." They preferred to do their weaving at home where they could work at their own pace and when they had time to spare.

Suraiya Hashim, a malong weaver for 11 years or since she was 12 and who worked on a loom owned by her brother, said it took her five days to finish the intricate Maranao pattern and three days to do the less elaborate designs like the Tausugs and Tedtops. Finished pieces of malong were brought to Davao City or even Manila.

"A four-meter finished Maranao malong went P950 while a Tausgkop and similar designs sold for P850," Hashim said. She added that people were also now buying the hand-woven fabrics as dress material. The weavers sold it down stream—two meters long—for P300 (Maranao) or P500.

Hashim said they also did shawls, with plans on selling the P150/each.

Bai Sandra Sema, wife of Cotabato City Mayor Datu Muslimin G. Sema and a former education undersecretary, says the Maguindanaon malong is very much part of the culture and history of Muslim Mindanao. She is spearheading a book project about the traditional costume of Maguindanao-ons that will also give a historical view of Cotabato City.

E-mail the author at bdela@hotmail.com

COLORFUL malong waiting for buyers

MANO says 12 kilos of brass are needed to make a large eight-piece ballmong.

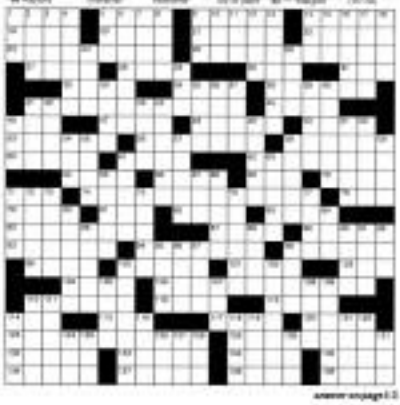
MANO'S 11-year-old nephew is learning how to carve the design into the wax mold.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Dennis J. Stone

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

ACROSS



answer on page C3